NATION

Arunachal flood toll hits 9; Assam on alert downstream

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Eternal, Swiggy lose $15B to Amazon's 10-min delivery

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SPORTS

Canada beats S Africa 1-0 in 1st WC knockout match

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

روزنامہ سالار بنگلور

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SIR BEGINS IN KARNATAKA, TO COVER 5.54 CRORE VOTERS

BENGALURU, 29 JUNE

CEO V Anbukkumar on Monday said BLOs would begin distributing enumeration forms from 30 June as Karnataka commenced the SIR of the 2026 electoral roll.

He said the qualifying date for the exercise is 1 October, 2026.

Addressing a press conference here, the chief electoral officer said BLOs would conduct house-to-house visits from 30 June to 29 July.

The draft electoral roll will be published on 5 August.

- "126 constituencies have completed more than 95 per cent mapping, while 173 constituencies have completed more than 90 per cent mapping," he said.

He said the period for filing claims and objections would be from 5 August to 4 September, while notices, wherever required, would be issued and claims and objections disposed of between 5 August and 3 October.

The final electoral roll will be published on 7 October.

"As far as Karnataka is concerned, the entire machinery is geared up for this exercise. We have deployed 68,123 officials, such as 59,050 booth level officers, 7,556 booth level supervisors and 224 electoral registration officers. All officers, from the chief electoral officer to district-level officers, have been trained and are ready to undertake this exercise," he said.

Anbukkumar said political parties had appointed around 1.15 lakh booth level agents, the majority of whom had been trained. "We have printed enumeration forms for more than 5.54 crore voters whose names appeared on the electoral roll as of 16 June, 2026. These forms have been distributed to BLOs at the polling station level," he said.

He requested all voters to affix their photographs to the forms, fill in the required details, sign them and return them to the respective BLOs. *—PTI*

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Court summons Priyank, Nalapad for RSS remarks

BENGALURU, 29 JUNE

A Bengaluru court has summoned Home Minister Priyank Kharge and Karnataka Pradesh Youth Congress Committee president Mohammed Haris Nalapad after taking cognisance of a private complaint alleging they made defamatory remarks against the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The XLII Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, Special Court for MPs/MLAs, Bengaluru, took cognisance of the complaint filed by Tejas A and registered an offence under Section 356 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, which deals with criminal defamation. Summons have been issued to both leaders. *—ANI*

>>>MORE ON PAGE 2

29 killed as Pak carries out strikes in Afghan

ISLAMABAD, 29 JUNE

Pakistan on Monday said at least 29 militants were killed in intelligence-based ground operations and precision strikes along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, even as the Taliban government accused Islamabad of launching airstrikes that killed and wounded at least 163 civilians in eastern Afghanistan. Pakistan summoned Afghanistan's charge d'affaires in Islamabad over the recent attack on a Pakistan Rangers headquarters in Karachi, alleging Afghan nationals and their territory were used to facilitate the assault. *—PTI*

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CBSE exempts Class 10 from 3-language policy

Classes 7, 8, 9 can continue learning 2 foreign languages this year

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Students entering Class 6 in 2026-27 will be the first full batch under the revised language policy *—MAGNIFIC*

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Monday issued fresh guidelines on implementing its three-language policy, granting a one-time exemption to the current batch of Class 10 students and easing norms for transition batches following concerns from schools and parents.

Students in Class 10 during the 2026-27 academic year will continue under the existing two-language system and will not be required to study a third language.

Current students in Classes 7, 8 and 9 will study three languages but have been given a one-time relaxation. Those already studying two foreign languages, such as English and French or German, may continue with that combination and add one Indian language instead of dropping a foreign language. The third language will be assessed only at the school level, with no Class 10 board examination.

Students entering Class 6 in 2026-27 will be the first full batch under the revised policy. They must study three languages, including at least two Indian languages, and will take a Class 10 board examination in the third language. This rule will apply to all subsequent batches.

CBSE also said transition batches would receive grade-appropriate learning material, replacing the earlier proposal to use Class 6 textbooks temporarily. Dedicated textbooks in 22 scheduled Indian languages will be introduced for the new Class 6 cohort.

- Students in Class 10 during the 2026-27 academic year will continue under the existing two-language system and will not be required to study a third language.

The board retained exemptions for Children with Special Needs, CBSE schools outside India and foreign students returning to India. Schools have also been allowed to use existing, retired or postgraduate teachers, shared teaching arrangements and digital platforms to implement the policy.

The clarification follows concerns over the board's May circular making three languages compulsory for Class 9 students from 1 July, prompting legal challenges and criticism over implementation. *—PTI*

Don says US-Iran will meet in Doha soon, Tehran denies

WASHINGTON, 29 JUNE

US President Donald Trump on Monday claimed that Iran had requested a meeting with the US after the recent military escalation between the two sides over the Strait of Hormuz and announced that talks with Tehran would take place in Doha, Qatar, on Tuesday, despite Iranian officials stating that no technical meetings have been scheduled this week.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump wrote, "IRAN HAS REQUESTED A MEETING. IT WILL TAKE PLACE TOMORROW IN DOHA!"

A senior US official also told Axios that both plan to meet Tuesday in Doha to work out their dispute over the Strait of Hormuz, Axios reported.

However, Iranian officials rejected reports suggesting that technical negotiations are set to begin imminently. According to Iran's state broadcaster, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs, Kazem Gharibabadi, said that no technical working group meetings are scheduled for this week under the framework of the 14-point Memorandum of Understanding aimed at ending the conflict in West Asia.

Meanwhile, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Sunday that Iran has the exclusive right to manage traffic in the Strait of Hormuz under the preliminary peace deal, the Wall Street Journal reported. They are at odds with American arguments that the deal doesn't give Iran control and that navigation must be unimpeded in the international waterway. As per the Wall Street Journal, the deal signed by Trump earlier in June assigns responsibility for opening the strait to Iran. *—ANI*

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WB passes bill to detain 'anti-socials' for up to 12 months

KOLKATA, 29 JUNE

A bill to curb anti-social activities, which includes a provision of detention for up to 12 months without trial, was passed in the West Bengal assembly on Monday. While introducing the West Bengal Public Safety and Control of Anti-social Activities Bill, 2026, Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari said the proposed legislation is aimed at preventing riots and other forms of violence. The CM said the bill is targeted at goondas and won't be misused in any manner, including for political purposes. He added that the bill was to curb anti-social activities. *—PTI*

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Eternal, Swiggy move K'taka HC over gig law

BENGALURU, 29 JUNE

The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and several platform aggregators have moved the Karnataka High Court challenging the constitutional validity of the Karnataka Platform Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Act, 2025, and the rules framed under it.

The petition has been filed jointly by IAMAI, Eternal Ltd, Zepto, Swiggy, Urban Company and Valmo Transportation. The matter is yet to be listed for hearing.

The petitioners have also sought the quashing of notices issued by the Chief Executive Officer under the Act directing platform companies to comply with statutory obligations, including constituting Internal Dispute Resolution Committees (IDRCs), paying welfare fees and furnishing information.

The companies argued that Parliament had already enacted the Code on Social Security, 2020, providing a comprehensive national framework for gig and platform workers. The Code covers identification of workers, welfare schemes, aggregator contributions and the regulatory mechanism for implementation.

According to the petition, despite the existence of this central framework, Karnataka enacted a parallel law imposing additional financial liabilities on aggregators and creating a separate regulatory structure.

The petition contends that the state law directly conflicts with the Central Code and is therefore unconstitutional under Article 254 of the Constitution, which deals with inconsistency between Central and State laws. *—Agencies*

MODI TO SKIP KHAMENEI'S FUNERAL; INDIA TO SEND EX-BIHAR GUV

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Bihar Governor Lieutenant General (Retd) Syed Ata Hasnain and Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita will attend the funeral ceremonies in Iran on behalf of the Government of India at the funeral ceremony of Iran's former Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei next month, Iranian sources said.

Khamenei was killed in the US-Israeli strikes on 28 February.

Iran President Masoud Pezeshkian had earlier sent a formal invitation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to attend the funeral ceremonies for Khamenei. On Saturday, Iranian state media Press TV reported that authorities in the Islamic Republic announced detailed arrangements for the two-day public farewell and funeral ceremonies of the late leader, with officials expecting one of the largest public gatherings in the country's history. *—PTI*

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TEJASVI MOVES HC AGAINST B'LURU TWIN TUNNEL PROJECT

BENGALURU, 29 JUNE

BJP MP Tejasvi Surya on Monday said he has filed a PIL in the High Court of Karnataka challenging the North–South Tunnel Road project in Bengaluru.

On an X post, he said he had requested the judge for a short date, and the matter would be listed for hearing on 6 July.

This comes a day after Chief Minister DK Shivakumar laid the foundation stone for a 2.5 km tunnel road between Mekhri Circle and Hebbal. The twin tunnels will be toll-free, the CM said, adding that the Bengaluru Development Authority will undertake the project using its own resources and funds.

Shivakumar said Hebbal had become the gateway to Bengaluru, and the tunnel would provide significant relief to traffic congestion in the area.

He added that the government was planning for the next 50 years and working to transform people's lives through infrastructure development.

In a post on X, Surya on Sunday claimed Shivakumar had not laid the foundation stone for the tunnel road, but "the tombstone of scientific urban planning." *—PTI*

Indian women's team qualifies as cricket returns to Olympics

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

The Indian women's cricket team has secured qualification for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, while the men's team is well placed to qualify after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) approved the qualification system for cricket's return to the Games.

India, Australia, Great Britain (through England) and South Africa have qualified for the six-team women's T20 competition by finishing as the highest-ranked teams from Asia, Oceania, Europe and Africa respectively at the ongoing ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026.

Cricket will return to the Olympics at LA28 for the first time since the 1900 Paris Games. Separate men's and women's T20 tournaments will feature six teams each, with squads of up to 15 players.

A total of 90 athlete quota places have been allocated for each event, with 28 matches to be played across the two competitions.

The IOC has now approved qualification systems for 49 sports since December 2025, with athletics and football expected to be confirmed soon. *—PTI*

Ayodhya Bar resolves not to defend Ram Temple accused

AYODHYA, 29 JUNE

The Faizabad Bar Association of Ayodhya on Monday resolved that none of its members would represent the eight accused arrested in the alleged embezzlement of Ram temple donations. Lawyers also demanded that three temple trust officials, Champat Rai, Anil Mishra and Gopal Rao leave Ayodhya within three days or face a city-wide blockade.

Bar Association President Kalika Prasad Mishra said any lawyer wishing to represent the accused must first deposit Rs 5 lakh per, which would be used to fund the prosecution. The association also announced it would write to CBI seeking a probe and, if needed, approach the Allahabad High Court and Supreme Court.

The Bar said it would seek registration of an FIR against Rai, Rao and Mishra under BNSS Section 156(3), which lets magistrate to order the police to investigate an offence if they have not acted on a complaint. The eight accused were associated with counting cash received as donations. *—PTI*

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'RAREST OF RARE'

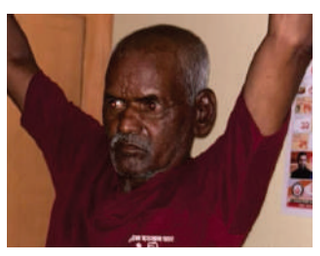
65-yr-old to be hanged for raping toddler

PUNE, 29 JUNE

A Pune court on Monday sentenced 65-year-old Bhimrao Kamble to death by hanging for the kidnapping, rape and murder of a three-year-old girl in Nasrapur village, a verdict delivered within 60 days of the crime that had sparked widespread outrage across Maharashtra.

Terming it the "rarest of rare" cases, Additional Judge SR Salunkhe rejected the defence's plea for leniency, citing Kamble's age, noting instead that his history of violence made age an aggravating factor. "The thirst for lust of the accused is not extinguished even at such an age. Rather, it has reached a very dangerous stage," the judge observed.

Kamble had lured the child with snacks before taking her to a shed near a cattle barn, where he sexually assaulted and murdered her. The prosecution argued he was "beyond reform," citing prior offences involving a 62-year-old woman, a 17-year-old girl and an animal.



Convict Bhimarao Kambale

The court convicted him on 25 June, the 55th day after the 1 May crime and sentenced him Monday after examining 55 witnesses. Special prosecutor Ajay Misar called the ruling landmark, saying the prosecution relied on 12 Supreme Court precedents to establish the rarest of rare criteria.

The victim's father said the family was satisfied with the verdict and wanted the sentence executed. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis hailed it as a "new benchmark" in speedy justice, crediting the judiciary and police for their swift handling of the case. *—PTI*

Man kills wife over infidelity doubts in Belagavi

BELAGAVI, 28 JUNE

A 35-year-old woman, Shobha Paragonda Sarawad, was reportedly hacked to death by her husband in Katageri village, Athani taluk of Belagavi in the State, on Saturday night. The couple had been married for 15 years, but the husband, Paragonda, often quarrelled with her over suspicions of infidelity. Police said he attacked Shobha with a sharp weapon while she was asleep, causing fatal injuries, and she died instantly. Shobha worked as a cook at Oujikar Math School. The accused has been arrested, leaving their two children devastated, with their mother dead and their father in custody. The incident has shocked the local community. *—SALAR NEWS*

Chamarajanagar court gets hoax bomb threat again

MYSURU, 29 JUNE

The Chamarajanagar District Court again received a hoax bomb threat for the third time in a month on Monday triggering immediate sweeps by the police, bomb disposal and sniffer dog experts. The bomb threats caused panic among the staff and led to suspension of court proceedings. The court received an email from a darkweb website claiming to be posted in the name of Ambunatham Ariyappan claiming that chemical bombs were placed at the Chamarajanagar District Court and the office of the Ambassador of Israel at Bengaluru which would explode at 1pm on Monday. Following the alert, police rushed to the court, evacuated the public, judges, lawyers, and staff. The court, lawyers, and other staff suspended work and vacated the premises till afternoon. A similar hoax bomb threat on the road connecting to the Chamarajanagar court, record room and E-Seva counter on the court's premises was reported last week.*—SALAR NEWS*

Cow killers jailed, human killers made PMs, CMs: BKH

MYSURU, 29 JUNE

Congress State President BK Hariprasad on Monday sparked a political controversy with an apparent swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying that while people go to jail for "killing cattle", those who "kill humans become Prime Ministers and Chief Ministers".

Addressing Congress workers at the party's 'Congress with You: Towards Protecting Your Vote' programme in Mysuru, organised to raise awareness about the Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, Hariprasad said the country was at a crossroads between Mahatma Gandhi's ideals and those of Nathuram Godse.

"We have to decide whether we follow Mahatma Gandhi's politics or Godse's. Doing politics is one thing, but religious politics is dangerous. Today, those who kill cattle go to jail, while those who kill humans become Prime Ministers and Chief Ministers," he said.

Hariprasad also accused the BJP and the RSS of undermining the Constitution and secularism. *— PTI*

Court summons Priyank, Nalapad for remarks on RSS

'Duo's remarks deeply hurt RSS members'

BENGALURU, 29 JUNE

A Bengaluru court has summoned Home Minister Priyank Kharge and Karnataka Pradesh Youth Congress Committee president Mohammed Haris Nalapad after taking cognisance of a private complaint alleging they made defamatory remarks against the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

The XLII Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, Special Court for MPs/MLAs, Bengaluru, took cognisance of the complaint filed by Tejas A and registered an offence under Section 356 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, which deals with criminal defamation. Summons have been issued to both leaders.

Complainant Tejas Gowda said he approached the court after feeling "deeply hurt" by the alleged remarks against the RSS.

Responding to the summons, Nalapad said he had full faith in the judiciary and would stand by his remarks.

"Freedom of speech is everyone's right. I am 100 per cent sure the court will give a fair verdict. I am not going to shy away from what I have said," he said, while alleging that the RSS was intolerant of criticism.

The case comes amid Priyank's sustained criticism of the RSS. In recent months, he has questioned the organisation's constitutional status, financial transparency and legal accountability, and alleged that the BJP functions as an instrument of the RSS.

Earlier this month, Kharge wrote an open letter to RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, seeking clarity on the organisation's legal status, financial compliance and constitutional accountability as it marks its centenary.

He has also renewed his demand for a ban on RSS shakhas and activities on government premises, schools, public playgrounds and Muzrai temple properties, alleging that the organisation promotes divisive ideology and operates without adequate oversight. *ANI*

'No move to privatise electricity distribution'

BENGALURU, 29 JUNE

Energy Minister KJ George said on Monday that there was no proposal to privatise electricity distribution in Karnataka, emphasising that the state's energy department is capable of delivering reliable power supply.

He was speaking at a felicitation programme organised at Bengaluru's Palace Grounds by the Federation of Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Employees' Unions and Associations.

Responding to reports that Tata Power Company has applied to the Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (KERC) seeking a licence to distribute electricity in Karnataka, George said, "Appropriate directions have already been issued regarding the privatisation issue and accordingly the ESCOMs have filed objections before the KERC."

He stressed that the Karnataka Energy Department is strong and the government will stand with the employees.

CM DK Shivakumar and Energy Minister KJ George were felicitated by KPTCL employees in Bengaluru on Monday — *MOHAMMED ASAD*

"We are in no way inferior to any private company. We have come here to serve the people. Therefore, the question of privatisation does not arise," he clarified.

George said the energy department has already prepared visionary plans, including a roadmap to ensure energy security for the next 25 years.

He said the government has established solar parks on 10,000 acres in partnership with farmers, and they have come forward to provide another 10,000 acres to establish solar parks. *— PTI*

REMOVAL OF VIJAYENDRA

Sadananda mum about audio

BENGALURU, 29 JUNE

Former chief minister DV Sadananda Gowda declined comment on an audio doing the rounds where he is discussing removing BY Vijayendra from the BJP state president's post.

Gowda said he will not comment on the audio. "No comments regarding this. The audio and video are not mine. So I will not reply," he told reporters.

Gowda, who was a Cabinet Minister in Prime Minister Modi's government said the media should find out the truth whether it is an AI creation or something else.

According to him, some "Payment TV channels" could be behind it.

In the video, the former CM is heard saying, "He (Vijayendra) is completing his three year term by November. Sir, it's just two months. Why should we create more confusion? If you create the confusion again,

the team of Vijayendra will slowly, smoothly...."

Gowda purportedly adds, "In two months we should push on this, and we should send him out."

Further, his purported voice says, "When his term is also over (in the next two months), nobody can complain against the removal of the president, and even here also there may not be any confusion inside the party... So starting from July, August, September, October, kick him out." *— PTI*

Deputy CM proposes $10B trade deal with Peru

BENGALURU, 29 JUNE

Deputy Chief Minister G Parameshwara proposed a Sister City Agreement between Bengaluru and Lima, the capital of Peru. Officials said on Monday that the proposal aims to deepen cooperation in trade, education, innovation, healthcare, and culture.

The proposal was made at a diplomatic reception in Bengaluru on Sunday, marking Peru's 205th Independence Day and 63 years of India-Peru diplomatic relations.

Peruvian Ambassador to India Javier Manuel Paulinich Velarde described Bengaluru as a global innovation hub and invited Indian businesses to invest in Peru, highlighting opportunities in AI, digital transformation, fintech, cybersecurity, and space technologies.

Emphasising Karnataka's global economic leadership, Parameshwara said the State contributes more than 40 per cent of India's IT software exports and biotechnology production, making it the country's technology and innovation hub. *— PTI*

City Police Commissioner Seemanth Kumar Singh with the seized narcotic substances—*MOHAMMED ASAD*

Drugs worth Rs 25.23 crore seized, 17 held in B'luru

BENGALURU, 29 JUNE

Seventeen people were arrested in separate cases, among them three foreign nationals and eight people from other states, after police seized narcotic substances worth Rs 25.23 crore from the City.

The searches were conducted in Subramanyanagar, Madiwala, Rajajinagar, Whitefield, Tilaknagar, Yeshwanthpur and Indiranagar. Police said the accused confessed that they had procured narcotic substances at low prices from suppliers based abroad, other states and Karnataka, and sold them at higher prices to the public, including college students, to make illegal profits.

They also admitted to manufacturing banned tobacco products.

Among the items seized were 10kg and 306g of MDMA, 127kg and 302g of ganja, 3kg and 314g of hydro ganja, 300 e-cigarettes, 90 hookah flavour packs, 30 hookah pots, hookah stands and bowls, foreign cigarette packs, various tobacco products allegedly manufactured in violation of the COTPA Act, seven mobile phones, one car and six two-wheelers, police officials said. *—PTI*

BJP MP flays govt over 4,500 delayed EV buses

BENGALURU, 29 JUNE

BJP MP Tejasvi Surya on Monday attacked Congress saying that while the Centre has sanctioned 4,500 electric buses for Bengaluru, the State cabinet is yet to provide the approval necessary for their deployment.

"This government, which has money and resources for VIP projects— Rs 1,300 crore worth of tunnel roads exclusively for cars.... For them, the person who travels by metro is not a priority." Surya said.

The Bengaluru South MP alleged that the state government was treating public transport users as "second-class citizens" by choosing to spend resources on "white-elephant projects" rather than expanding the city's bus fleet as committed.

"Congress claims to have spent nearly Rs 5,500 crore on Bengaluru's roads in the last three years. Yet, potholes continue to dominate our streets and road conditions are only getting worse. Where has this taxpayer's money gone? Bengaluru deserves transparency." Surya asserted. *—ANI*

CRIME BEAT

Man stabs girlfriend for refusing marriage

BENGALURU, 29 JUNE

A 23-year-old Bengaluru woman was allegedly stabbed to death by her boyfriend after she refused to marry him, police said Monday.

The victim, Anjali, a resident of Bhuvaneshwari Nagar in KP Agrahara, was killed at 8.30pm on Sunday on Pipeline Road in Mahalakshmi Layout.

The accused, Rajeev, had known Anjali for four years; the two were colleagues who had allegedly been in a relationship. He allegedly asked her to meet him for dinner, where he proposed marriage. When she refused, an argument broke out and he allegedly stabbed her in the neck with a knife. Residents rushed her to a nearby hospital, where she succumbed to her injuries.

A senior police officer noted Anjali's family was aware of her relationship and had opposed the marriage because he had a criminal background and was named in at least three criminal cases. — PTI

B'luru physio found dead in Chikkaballapur homestay

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 29 JUNE

A 26-year-old physiotherapist from Bengaluru was found dead under suspicious cir-cumstances at the Nandi Skandagiri Homestay near Muddenahalli village in Chikkabal-lapur taluk on Monday, while the man accompanying her was found unconscious inside the room.

The incident came to light when the caretaker of the homestay alerted the police after noticing that a room remained locked for several hours.

The deceased is Sai Surabhi, 26. The man Sanjeeth Ali 25, a Mechanical Engineering graduate from Kozhikode, Keralam, is undergoing treatment.

Police said the two had been in a live-in relationship for the past few years. They had reportedly eloped from Bengaluru to Keralam about a year ago before returning to Ben-galuru.

Surabhi, who was volunteering at Satya Sai Hospital in Muddenahalli, had informed her family that she would be staying there after attending the programme and had left home about a week ago.

The body has been shifted for post-mortem examination to ascertain the exact cause of death.

Based on a complaint lodged by the victim's mother, Geetha, alleging that her daughter was murdered by Sanjeeth Ali, the Nandi Police have registered a case of murder. *—Salar News*

5 held for toy pistol-aided robbery of Rs 1.09 crore

BENGALURU, 29 JUNE

Five people have been arrested for allegedly kidnapping a man and his driver at gunpoint — using a toy pistol — and robbing them of Rs 1.09 crore in cash in Bengaluru, police said on Monday.

The incident occurred on the night of 15 June near a temple in Kuduregere Colony, under Madanayakanahalli Police Station limits. Seven unidentified individuals arriving on a motorcycle and in a car intercepted the complainant's vehicle, which had Rs 74 lakh in its boot.

The accused threatened to kill the complainant unless he arranged an additional Rs 35 lakh. After his family delivered the cash, the accused abandoned both victims in a deserted area near Nelamangala.

Police revealed that one of the accused was the victim's former driver, who tipped off his associates that the businessman would be transporting a large sum of money meant for a mega corporate investment. — PTI

DISCREPANCIES IN BLO DETAILS

Congress demands SIR deferment over BLO data mismatch

BENGALURU, 29 JUNE

Congress on Monday alleged serious discrepancies in the details of Booth Level Officers (BLOs) and BLO Supervisors published on the CEO's official website and urged the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) to immediately postpone the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls,

In a letter submitted by Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) Media and Communication Department chairman and MLC Ramesh Babu, the party claimed that two official databases on the CEO's website carry conflicting information. While one list titled 'BLOs & BLO Supervisor List' contains names and mobile numbers of election officials, another section titled 'Information on Voter Facilitation Centres, BLO Facilitation Centres and Officer Contact Details' lists different names and contact numbers for the same polling areas.

Congress said the discrepancies were found in several Assembly constituencies, including Chikkanayakanahalli and Yeshwanthpur where different BLOs and BLO supervisors are shown for the same jurisdiction.

The party said the conflicting information creates confusion among voters, political parties, Booth Level Agents (BLAs), election observers and other stakeholders.

Congress said the discrepancies were found in several Assembly constituencies like Chikkanayakanahalli and Yeshwanthpur—*PTI*

A voter relying on one official list could be directed to a different officer in another, affecting access to enrolment, correction, deletion and other electoral services.

The party sought:

- Immediate verification and rectification of the discrepancies.
- Publication of a single authenticated list of Booth Level Officers (BLOs) and Booth Level Officer Supervisors with correct names, polling station details and mobile numbers.
- District-wise verification of all Booth Level Officers and Booth Level Officer Supervisor contact details.

—Salar News

Cong not against SIR but EC must address concerns: Priyank

Home Minister Priyank Kharge said on Monday that the state government was not opposed to SIR but urged the ECI to first respond to Congress' objections, alleging that voters should not be removed without due legal process. As SIR is set to begin from Tuesday, he said the state Cabinet had submitted eight objections to the Chief Election Commissioner and sought clarity on issues like 'logical discrepancy', legal notices, speaking orders and access to tribunals before deleting names from electoral rolls. He said the Congress had also submitted objections to the Karnataka CEO, but didn't receive any response. *—PTI*

SIR begins in Delhi on Tuesday

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Delhi's electoral rolls will commence on Tuesday, with over 13,000 booth-level officers (BLOs) conducting door-to-door verification, announced Delhi Chief Electoral Officer Ashok Kumar. Delhi's voter population stands at 1.45 crore, with 77.11 lakh males, 67.98 lakh females, 1,024 third-gender voters, and 76,155 with disabilities. The city has 3,29,130 young voters aged 18-19, and 192 voters over 100 years old. The survey will cover 13,033 polling stations across the state. The survey concludes on 29 July, with draft rolls published on 5 August. Claims and objections can be filed from 5 August to 4 September. *—PTI*

Rabri Devi vacates govt bungalow as deadline ends

PATNA, 29 JUNE

Former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi has started vacating her bungalow at 10 Circular Road, with the deadline to leave expiring on Monday. CCTV cameras have been uninstalled, and personal belongings removed, mostly being shifted to her family's private residence in Kautilya Nagar, according to an RJD leader. The bungalow was allotted to Dairy and Fisheries Minister Nand Kishor Ram on 27 May, after the building construction department issued four notices, since Rabri Devi had stayed there for around two decades. The residence is scheduled for formal handover to the new allottee after the deadline. Rabri Devi has been allotted house number 39 on Hardinge Road. The state government also downgraded security for Rabri Devi Lalu Prasad. *—PTI*

Ex-TN minister MR Vijayabaskar resigns as MLA

CHENNAI, 29 JUNE

Former Tamil Nadu Minister MR Vijayabaskar resigned as MLA on Monday, becoming the sixth AIADMK legislator to do so after the party's electoral defeat in April. The resignation follows a wave of exits from the party since 4 May, when the election results were announced. Vijayabaskar, a former transport minister in J Jayalalithaa's cabinet, met Tamil Nadu Assembly Speaker JCD Prabhakar and submitted his handwritten resignation, which was accepted. He was elected from Karur in 2026 but lost from the same seat in 2021. His resignation raises the AIADMK's assembly strength to 41 from 47. Several other MLAs resigned and joined the ruling Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam *—PTI*

M'rashtra: NCP (SP) leads farmers' protest against govt

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 29 JUNE

NCP (SP) leader Rohit Pawar launched a farmers' protest, accusing the Maharashtra government of "betrayal" for not holding promises on farm loan waiver scheme. Pawar had earlier gone on an indefinite hunger strike over the scheme but called it off after assurances of a meeting, which has yet to occur. He criticised the government for not honouring promises and claimed around 1,000 police personnel were deployed, indicating possible suppression efforts. Pawar insisted the protest was non-political and demanded removal of scheme conditions aand restoration of crop insurance triggers. *—PTI*

Bengal passes Anti-Social Activities Bill

The Bill proposes preventive detention of 'anti-socials' for up to 12 months without trial

KOLKATA, 29 JUNE

The West Bengal assembly on Monday passed the West Bengal Public Safety and Control of Anti-Social Activities Bill, 2026, with 176 members voting in its favour and 41 against it.

The Bill aims to ensure public safety, maintain law and order, and establish stronger control over organised anti-social activities.

One of the most debated provisions of the Bill is preventive detention. If the State Government or an authorised officer believes that a person's activities may pose a threat to public safety, a detention order may be issued against that person.

The bill proposes preventive detention for up to 12 months without trial.

Officials said that the bill provides that notwithstanding anything contained in the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, every offence punishable under this Act and every wilful contravention of any lawful order made under this Act shall be cognizable and non-bailable.

According to the bill, a detained person must be informed of the grounds for detention.

However, the authorities will have the power to withhold information considered necessary to protect the public interest.

The law will also empower authorities to search, seize, and confiscate property, documents, and other materials connected with anti-social activities.

The law will also empower authorities to search, seize, and confiscate property, documents, and other materials connected with anti-social activities *–ANI*

The government stated that it felt the need for a new legal framework after observing that existing provisions were insufficient to deal with organised anti-social elements.

Speaking on the bill, Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari accused both the Trinamool Congress and Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) of political violence.

"We witnessed how the CPI(M) introduced 'goonda culture' into Bengal's politics. In 2001, they deployed 'Harmads' specifically to prevent others from gaining power through democratic means," he added.

Adhikari assured that the government will not misuse the laws and will ensure that no damage is caused to public and government property.

"If you do not wish to abide by this law, go and protest in a state governed by the INDIA alliance," he added. *—ANI*

Draft UCC bill to be placed before WB cabinet on 2 July

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Monday announced that a draft Uniform Civil Code (UCC) bill will be placed before the state cabinet on 2 July.

Adhikari said that former Supreme Court judge Ranjana Prakash Desai will head a committee to formulate the UCC bill. The bill will be tabled in the assembly later, he said. The proposed legislation seeks to establish a common civil framework governing marriage, divorce, inheritance and adoption irrespective of religion

Akhilesh flags 'Karnataka links' in Ram Temple row

PRAYAGRAJ, 29 JUNE

Accusing the BJP of prioritising "donations over the nation" and betraying public faith, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Monday promised transparent governance, quality education and employment if his party comes to power in UP in 2027.

Addressing a press conference here, Yadav pointed to the alleged irregularities in donations for the Ram Temple, claiming that the people of Ayodhya suggested the "links of the theft" extended to Karnataka.

He alleged that "unregistered" people from Karnataka were involved in election-related conspiracies.

"Chor-chor sautele bhai, jinhone churayi Bhagwan Ram ki pai (Thieves are like stepbrothers who stole even Lord Ram's offerings)," Yadav said, alleging that only "small fish" were being caught.

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav *–PTI*

Yadav said the alleged theft of offerings at the Ram temple in Ayodhya amounted to "playing with the faith" of devotees.

"The BJP's focus is not on the nation but on donations. There is loot in every sphere under their rule. There is neither religion nor shame in the BJP's dictionary," he said.

Appealing to what he termed "true Sanatanis", Yadav urged them not to vote for the BJP or seek election tickets from the party, alleging that it had "betrayed Lord Ram". *—PTI*

8 RS MEMBERS TAKE OATH; KHARGE IS LOP

Congress Chief Mallikarjun Kharge and BJP leader Tarun Chugh were among the eight newly-elected members of the Rajya Sabha who took oath on Monday. The oath was administered by Rajya Sabha Chairman CP Radhakrishnan. Kharge was also re-appointed as the Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha effective from 26 June. The other elected/re-elected members were Mansingh Meraman Parmar, Alka Singh, Jitendra Meghjibhai Kanzariya, Rajendra Hiralal Jain, M Nagaraja and Adhikarimayum Sharda Devi *–PTI*

CPI(M) leaders 'conspired' in attack on its officers, ED tells court

T'PURAM, 29 JUNE

The ED told the court on Monday that the attack on its officers after the search of the residence of former chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan for a money laundering case involving his daughter was the result of a conspiracy by the top leadership of the CPI(M).

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) made the claims before the Thiruvananthapuram District and Sessions Court opposing the bail plea of the 12th accused, Lenin Raj.

While the ED officials and security personnel were returning after the search of Vijayan's residence, CPI(M) activists allegedly blocked their vehicles and damaged them. Around 300 people were named and several arrested. The controversy deepened after the ninth accused, Harish Kumar, was granted bail, with police alleging their 13-point objection was never placed before the court by the then public prosecutor.

The ED later moved the court, seeking to implead itself and approached the Kerala High Court, challenging the bail granted to Kumar.

The ED alleged that top CPI(M) leaders, including state and district secretaries, orchestrated a criminal conspiracy, with their presence at the protest being evidence.

The agency further claimed that inflammatory language used by senior leaders was a deliberate signal to supporters to turn the demonstration violent.

The bail plea hearing was adjourned to 3 July. *—PTI*

SC refuses urgent hearing on Ram Temple probe plea

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Monday refused urgent hearing on a plea seeking a fair and time-bound probe into the alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

Justices MM Sundresh and Sheel Nagu said the matter will be listed for hearing after the summer break. "Heavens are not going to fall... What is the urgency," the bench observed orally.

The petition, filed by advocates Ajay Kumar Rai and Dinesh Kumar Yadav, said a CBI-led multi-disciplinary SIT should investigate the financial irregularities and other purported illegalities concerning the administration of the Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust.

The petition calling for an FIR in the matter also sought directions to the Centre, the UP government and the temple trust to constitute and operationalise regulatory, supervisory and audit mechanisms as may be necessary to maintain the confidence of millions of devotees and donors.

"Whether or not the reports regarding missing funds and other alleged irregularities concerning the Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust are ultimately found to be true, such reports have caused deep concern among the generations who struggled for the restoration of Ayodhya' glory," the plea said.

The SIT constituted by the UP government has commenced inquiry into the matter without the registration of an FIR, it alleged.

The plea said the veracity of reports concerning missing funds and other irregularities involving the temple trust ought to be verified through an investigation conducted by an agency possessing expertise for handling complex investigations. *—PTI*

Champat Rai's brother defends him

The brother of Champat Rai, who resigned from as general secretary of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, defended him against the allegations of embezzling donations for the Ram Temple, saying his brother had sacrificed his personal life and career for the Ram Temple movement.

On Monday, Sunil Bansal, a resident of Bijnor district, said, Rai dedicated his life to the RSS and the Ram Temple movement. Following allegations of large-scale embezzlement of donations at Ram Temple, questions have arisen regarding Champat Rai's involvement, triggering his resignation from the trust.

SBI sought removal of Ram Temple staff: Cong

Congress on Monday claimed State Bank of India, three months ago, recommended the removal of officials at the donation counting centre at Ayodhya's Ram Temple and sought to know who were protecting them before the fund embezzlement came to light. AICC Pawan Khera said, "SBI had recommended three months ago that those posted at the counting centre be removed. Who has been protecting them? Nagpur or Delhi?"

Oppn seeks action over viral video of TN minister

CHENNAI, 29 JUNE

An old viral video showing Tamil Nadu Minister D Sarath Kumar purportedly crushing a pill has resurfaced, sparking a controversy and prompting opposition parties to demand strict action.

The DMK organised protests across Tamil Nadu on Monday, calling for his resignation. Protesters criticised the Chief Minister for silence and failure to address the issue directly, warning protests would intensify until Sarath Kumar is dropped from the cabinet and a formal explanation is given.

In Chennai, police denied permission for protests near Rajarathnam Stadium, detaining over 20 protesters, with plans for their release in the evening.

In Tirunelveli and Vellore, over 250 and 100 protesters respectively were detained. DMK MLA PK Sekar Babu accused police of forcefully intervening despite party requests for peaceful protests, and demanded Sarath Kumar undergo a medical test for cocaine.

Sarath Kumar *–SCREENGRAB*

- An old viral video showing Tamil Nadu Minister D Sarath Kumar purportedly crushing a pill has resurfaced, sparking a controversy and prompting opposition parties to demand strict action.

Sarath Kumar, who was recently inducted as Human Resources Management Minister, denied the claims, stating he crushed a medicine tablet for his ailing daughter during an IPL match. The video was circulated on social media, raising political and public concerns *—PTI*

RAJNATH MUST QUIT FOR LIES ON SINDOOR MARTYRS: CONG

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Congress on Monday demanded the resignation of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, accusing him of "lying" in Parliament by claiming no soldier was martyred during Operation Sindoor, and called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi to publicly apologise.

The opposition party accused the government of concealing the sacrifice of six soldiers during Operation Sindoor, denying them honours, calling it an "insult to our soldiers."

"When Defence Minister Rajnath Singh was lying in Parliament that no soldier had been martyred, the BJP MPs were clapping... Rajnath Singh has insulted the country's army and soldiers — we demand his resignation," Congress' Ex-Servicemen Department chief Col Rohit Chaudhry (retd) said.

The government, however, said Singh's speech was misrepresented to falsely suggest he claimed no Indian soldiers died during Operation Sindoor. *—PTI*

SOUTHERN STATES WORRIED

Govt eyes 50% increase of LS seats for all

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

The government is learnt to be working on multiple formulations to increase the number of Lok Sabha seats for all states by 50 per cent to assuage the concerns of southern states, as it seeks to operationalise a fresh draft of the Constitution Amendment Bill on women's quota law.

The draft is being readied keeping in mind the concerns of the southern states that a population-based delimitation exercise would shrink their political power in the Lok Sabha.

The first Bill failed to clear the Lok Sabha test on 17 April, as the government could not muster the two-thirds majority required to pass it.

Building on the earlier Bill, the fresh draft is learnt to have proposed keeping the existing inter-state seat ratios intact based on the 1971 Census. But this is one of the formulations the government is working on, and no final decision has been reached, sources said.

Lok Sabha and Assembly seats will be redrawn based on the 2011 Census figures, as the numbers of the current census have not come out.

The Bill will be tabled in Parliament only after the government is confident of the numbers, the sources said.

As of now, the NDA has around 300 MPs in the Lok Sabha with three vacancies. It needs 360 votes to achieve the two-thirds mark.

Under the current law, reservation for women would not be enforceable before 2034, as the process is tied to the completion of the delimitation exercise post the 2027 Census.

Changes are needed in the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, or women's reservation law to implement it from the 2029 Lok Sabha elections. *—PTI*

India has no role in Track 2 dialogue with Pak: Misri

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Foreign Secretary **Vikram Misri** on Monday said the government has no involvement with retired diplomats and military officials participating in overseas discussions on India-Pakistan ties in their personal capacities and that New Delhi does not even take cognisance of such deliberations.

Misri's remarks to the media at Victoria in Seychelles came in the wake of reports that Indian and Pakistani experts comprising retired military officials, diplomats and politicians participated in Track 2 discussions on the sidelines of a regional security conference in Colombo last week.

"Dozens of these kinds of events take place in dozens of places around the world on a whole variety of subjects. There's nothing new, nothing special about these events," he said.

"Obviously, I cannot speak for the government of Pakistan, but as far as the government of India is concerned, there is no official participation."

"We really take no cognisance of these events. They really don't hold much value, as far as we are concerned," Misri added. *—PTI*

Man killed in row over cutting down babool tree

KAUSHAMBI, 29 JUNE

A dispute over the felling of a family-owned babool tree turned fatal in Uttar Pradesh's Kaushambi district, police said on Monday. Babbu Lal, 50, working at a Bihar brick kiln, returned to his village after learning his elder brother, Raja, had cut down the tree a day earlier. An argument erupted, escalating into a physical altercation, police added. Raja allegedly thrashed Babbu Lal, causing him to fall onto a cot's leg, resulting in serious injuries. Babbu Lal later died during treatment at a district hospital. An FIR under murder charges has been registered against Raja, who remains absconding, police confirmed. Further legal proceedings are underway. —*PTI*

M'rashtra FDA busts food racket in Thane district

THANE, 29 JUNE

The Maharashtra FDA has uncovered an interstate racket reselling expired and damaged food items, officials said Monday. The authorities seized illegal stock worth over Rs 52 lakh during raids at eight establishments in Bhiwandi. A warehouse in Saravali had 1.5 tonnes of unbilled expired food worth Rs 1.67 lakh suspended. Police intercepted a truck carrying 1,200kg of expired flour and branded products worth Rs 5.18 lakh without invoices. The syndicate involved unauthorised scrap agencies fabricating disposal certificates and erasing expiry dates using chemicals. FDA Commissioner Tukaram Mundhe warned that violators will face licence cancellations and criminal prosecution under the new norms. —*PTI*

—*PTI*

Thieves break into jailed ex-judge's house in Bhopal

BHOPAL, 29 JUNE

Thieves broke into the residence of Giribala Singh, a former judge jailed over her daughter-in-law Twisha Sharma's death, police said Monday. Suspects fled after abandoning stolen items late Saturday night when police sirens approached. Police are investigating, with CCTV footage showing four entering Singh's Katara Hills house from the back, while two stood outside. Singh's brother, retired Colonel Ranveer Singh Bhadoria, was sleeping inside when the theft occurred around 2 am. The thieves stole a gold necklace and silver items but left behind clothes and a bag. Twisha Sharma was found hanging at this house on 12 May, and her husband and Singh are in jail. —*PTI*

Telangana school booked for teaching Urdu

HYDERABAD, 29 JUNE

A case has been registered after parents alleged that a Hindi teacher at a private school in Nizamabad district was unauthorisedly teaching Urdu, despite it not being part of the syllabus. The incident, which surfaced on 27 June, led to protests from BJP activists and Hindu organisations, prompting an investigation by police, revenue, and education department officials following a visit to the school. A police official said a case was registered against the activists after a complaint from the school's correspondent, alleging assault. The Tahsildar lodged a complaint stating Urdu and Namaz were being taught without permission, leading to a case against the school's Correspondent, Principal, and the concerned teacher. —*PTI*

Mud-covered scooters lie amid debris after a devastating flash flood struck the NEEPCO Colony, in Keyi Panyor district, Arunachal Pradesh, on Monday; A man uses a makeshift raft to travel through floodwaters, in Morigaon district, in Assam —*PTI*

Arunachal flood toll hits 9; Assam on alert downstream

Roads, bridges & houses damaged in 12 Arunachal districts

ITANAGAR, 29 JUNE

Heavy monsoon rains continued to wreak havoc across Arunachal Pradesh on Monday, with rescue operations underway as floods and landslides damaged roads, bridges and houses, claimed nine lives in 12 districts. Assam has also has issued a high alert after extremely heavy rainfall and floods were reported in Arunachal's Lower Subansiri district.

Heavy rainfall has also severely damaged the Roing-Anini road in Lower Dibang Valley district, with flash floods washing away roads and bridges at several locations.

In Anjaw district, an excavator operator is feared dead after a massive rock crushed the vehicle engaged in highway construction near Sarti village on Sunday night.

Of the 11 major roads hit, only two have been reopened, while nine, including the Pasighat-Pangin, Pasighat-Mariyang-Yingkiong, Pasighat-Mebo-Dambuk-Bomjir, Bilat-Ledum and Pasighat-Yagrung-Ledum-Tene roads, remain blocked or unsafe.

The death toll rose to three after the body of Saurabh Kumar Kharwar was recovered near Hawa Camp in adjoining Papum Pare district on Sunday. Earlier, the bodies of a 35-year-old woman and another woman were recovered on Wednesday and Saturday, respectively.

The rain has so far affected Keyi Panyor, Papum Pare, Kra Daadi, Kurung Kumey, Lower Subansiri, Kamle, Upper Subansiri, East Siang, Leparada, Lower Siang, Lower Dibang Valley and Anjaw districts.

ASSAM ALERT

The Assam government has issued a high alert after extremely heavy rainfall and flash floods were reported in Arunachal Pradesh's Lower Subansiri district, potentially impacting several districts of Assam downstream.

An Assam government spokesperson said teams of the NDRF, the SDRF, and other emergency agencies are being kept ready, and field-level officers have been directed to closely monitor river conditions.

CENTRAL HELP

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday assured the chief ministers of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh of all possible assistance from the Centre for flood relief operations, officials said.

Shah called Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma and Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu to take stock of the situation. — *PTI*

Marathi must in all M'rashtra schools

MUMBAI, 29 JUNE

Maharashtra minister **Dada Bhuse** said on Monday that teaching of the Marathi language and conducting its examinations have been made mandatory in schools of all mediums across the state, and institutions that fail to comply could face cancellation of recognition.

Replying to a debate during Question Hour in the assembly, Bhuse, who is School Education Minister, said Marathi has been made compulsory from Classes 1 to 10 in schools of all mediums in the state under the Maharashtra Compulsory Teaching and Learning of Marathi Language in Schools Act, 2020.

Schools must also appoint qualified Marathi teachers and that compliance would be monitored, he said.

"If a school does not implement the provisions, it will first be asked to rectify the violation. If it still fails to teach Marathi, a fine of up to Rs 1 lakh can be imposed. If there is continued non-compliance, the school's recognition can also be cancelled as per GOs issued on 17 April 2026," he added.

Responding to members' queries, Bhuse clarified that Marathi would not remain merely a compulsory subject on paper.

"Marathi examinations will be conducted for every class in all schools all over the state," he said. — *PTI*

Opposition seeks CBI probe into TET leak

MUMBAI, 29 JUNE

Opposition parties in the Maharashtra legislative council on Monday demanded a CBI probe into the alleged leak of the state Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) question paper, and sought Education Minister Dada Bhuse's resignation.

The House was also adjourned for 30 minutes after an opposition ruckus.

Speaking in the council, Bhuse said a detailed statement will be made in the House over the matter later in the day.

A SIT has already been constituted and four teams have been set up, he said.

The government's stand is to take stern action in this matter. Decisions will also be taken on how to conduct these exams in a transparent manner, he added.

Raising this issue in the House, Ambadas Danve of the Shiv Sena (UBT) said when the government had a recent example of NEET-UG paper leak, then why it did not take precautionary measures for the TET and other exams. — *PTI*

VAX DRIVE

Health workers trek to reach nomadic Gujjar families during a polio vaccination drive in J&K's Pulwama district on Monday—*PTI*

Bail quashed in Delhi school rape case

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

The Delhi High Court on Monday cancelled the bail granted to a 57-year-old private school caretaker accused of raping a three-year-old girl on school premises in Delhi's Janakpuri, and asked him to surrender on 1 July.

Justice Vinod Kumar passed the verdict on pleas by the Delhi Police and the complainant against the trial court's 7 May decision to release Lalit Kumar on bail in the POCSO case.

Additional Solicitor General SV Raju submitted that it was a clear case of aggravated penetrative sexual assault which was punishable with a minimum term of 20 years in jail. The child had already identified the perpetrator and made specific allegations, he added.

The counsel for the accused had denied all allegations, stating that the "foundational facts" of the case cannot be sustained.

The incident came to light on 1 May when the girl's mother filed a complaint at the Janakpuri police station, alleging that her daughter was sexually assaulted by the caretaker.

According to the complaint, the child had gone to the school on 30 April.

After returning home, she complained of pain. When questioned by her mother, the girl said that she was taken to an isolated area in the school, where the man allegedly assaulted her.

Police said the child identified the accused, following which the caretaker was arrested on 1 May. — *PTI*

Muslim's blood letter demands 'Rashtra Mata' tag for cow

VARANASI, 29 JUNE

Samajwadi Party leader Zeeshan Ansari said on Monday that he has written a letter in his blood to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding "Rashtra Mata" for the cow.

Ansari wrote the letter outside the district magistrate's office in Varanasi and submitted it addressed to the prime minister.

Ansari told the reporters that, since he comes from the Muslim community, he has taken this initiative. BJP leaders keep making different statements regarding the cow. He want the BJP to make its stand clear by declaring the cow as the 'Rashtra Mata.

He said the cow occupies a special place in the sentiments of people in India.

Ansari alleged that while cows hold deep reverence in Indian households, BJP leaders Suvendu Adhikari and Himanta Biswa Sarma had made statements about eating roti with cows. In many households, the first roti is set aside for the cow, he added.

The demand is particularly significant in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state with a sizeable Muslim population, where similar calls have traditionally come from Hindu organisations.

It was raised during the last Eid-ul-Azha festival preceding the 2027 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections too. This demand emerging from the Muslim community carries its own distinct significance. Maulana Razvi, the President of the All India Muslim Jamaat, wholeheartedly supported the demand to designate the cow as the 'National Animal'.

Razvi said he wants to forge a consensus among all Muslims on this matter. — Agencies

My RSS remarks legal, says IPS officer Patil

NAGPUR, 29 JUNE

The new Nagpur Police Commissioner, Vishwas Nangare Patil, who has drawn flak over his old video 'praising' the RSS during an event, said on Monday that the remarks he made at the function were within the framework of the law, and that he did not violate any service rules.

Asserting that he is committed to the Constitution, he said he respects all religions.

A video of Nangare Patil's speech at the Hindu Sammelan held on 19 April at Sanpada in Navi Mumbai by the Sakal Hindu Samaj went viral last week, triggering a row.

The Congress demanded an inquiry into the speech delivered by the senior IPS officer at the event, where he "praised" the RSS, stating that it raises questions about his neutrality and compliance with service rules. MNS chief Raj Thackeray also slammed Vishwas, saying he should resign and join the RSS if he wanted to admire it.

Addressing his first press conference after taking over as the Nagpur Police Commissioner, Vishwas said he respects all religions. — *PTI*

Vishwas, left, being greeted by IPS officer Ravinder as he takes charge as the Nagpur police chief—*PTI*

Siya 'sat down' to save herself: Police

PUNE, 29 JUNE

Pune realtor Ketan Agarwal's fiancée Siya Goyal sat down not only to signal her lover Chetan Chaudhary to push him off Lohagad Fort, but also to ensure that she remained out of the victim's reach during the fall, police said.

Chaudhary had travelled to the site on a scooter as he feared a car could be detected at a toll plaza. An official said that as per the plan, Siya was expected to give a signal by sitting down, after which Chaudhary was to come up and push Agarwal to his death. They executed the plan perfectly, he said.

The two had decided that she would sit down either to drink water or on the pretext of tying her shoelaces. Sitting down was also a move to protect Siya.

"The signal was chosen deliberately so that Siya would not be within the victim's reach during the push. They feared that if Chetan pushed Ketan and the latter tried to grab Siya, she too could fall into the gorge," he said. Chaudhary had also hid his presence as he followed Siya and Ketan Agarwal on 18 June.

Police escort Siya Goyal to the Lonavala Gramin Police Station for questioning—*PTI*

After ly committing the crime, Chaudhary returned to Pune on his scooter. Chaudhary changed his appearance after reaching the fort. "He climbed the fort wearing a hoodie. Later, he removed it. While leaving, he put on the hoodie again," the official said. — PTI

NAME DELETED IN SIR

Satheesan takes up ex-editor's passport case

T'PURAM, 29 JUNE

Kerala Chief Minister VD Satheesan wrote to his West Bengal counterpart Suvendu Adhikari on Monday, seeking his intervention in the passport renewal application of journalist Rajagopal Ramadas, the former editor of 'The Telegraph.'

Rajagopal's passport renewal application was held up due to an adverse police report, drawing criticism from journalists and political leaders.

"I understand that the adverse report is based on the deletion of his name from the electoral roll during SIR. While the electoral issue is being addressed through appeal, I am informed that the police report has resulted in a delay in renewing his passport," Satheesan said in the letter.

Chief Minister Satheesan said Rajagopal, a Keralite, is a renowned journalist who had been in Kolkata for the last three decades—*PTI*

The CM said Rajagopal, a Keralite, is a renowned journalist who had been in Kolkata for the last three decades.

He also said Rajagopal is the son of Professor V Ramadas, who was the Kerala secretary of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi.

Leader of the Opposition Pinarayi Vijayan described the denial of passport renewal as an act of political vendetta.

Vijayan said Rajagopal was among the 27 lakh people whose names were deleted during the SIR in the Ballygunge constituency of Kolkata. Rajagopal has challenged the deletion before the tribunal. He said that although Rajagopal had received a notice asking him to appear before the regional passport office, he was given an appointment only on 17 July. As a result, he was unable to attend his daughter's wedding in California. — *PTI*

- Former Telegraph editor Rajagopal's passport renewal application was held up due to an adverse Kolkata police report, drawing criticism from journalists and political leaders

ROADS, TRAFFIC LIGHTS MELT IN EUROPE

The unprecedented heatwave in Europe has so far killed hundreds, and is now damaging infrastructure. In Germany, roads, railway tracks and even traffic lights have been damaged as heat melted asphalt and metal. Similar reports emerged from Sweden, Britain and other places

– SCREENGRAB

State-run oil firms are indispensable in India

Every time India has faced a major crisis - whether devastating floods, a once-in-a-century pandemic or the latest conflict in West Asia that threatened global oil supplies - it has been the country's state-run oil companies that have quietly kept fuel flowing.

For decades, India's public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs) have often been criticised for low returns, government intervention in fuel pricing and bloated operations. They have twice been put on the block for privatisation, with plans to sell Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) gathering momentum in 2002 before being halted by a Supreme Court ruling and again in 2020, before the process was abandoned after failing to attract enough bids.

Yet every national emergency has reinforced why governments have been reluctant to loosen their grip on companies that control the country's energy lifeline, analysts and industry officials said.

The latest conflict in West Asia once again highlighted its strategic importance.

As the Iran war disrupted crude trade routes and raised concerns over supplies through the Strait of Hormuz, India's state refiners rapidly reconfigured operations. They increased LPG production by diverting refinery streams away from petrochemicals, diversified crude procurement across geographies, optimised refinery runs based on available feedstock and coordinated fuel supplies nationwide to avoid local shortages.

"The result was that no corner of the country went without fuel. Unlike several countries, including those in the neighbourhood, India did not see any rationing of fuel," an industry official said.

The companies also leaned on India's strategic petroleum reserves and commercial inventories, while working closely with the government to reassure markets that adequate supplies would be maintained.

Every national emergency has reinforced why governments have been reluctant to loosen their grip on companies that control the country's energy lifeline – AI

All this they did while passing on the least minimum impact of the spurt in global oil prices to consumers. For a good two-and-a-half months, the three firms absorbed the more than 50 per cent spurt in international oil prices and then raised petrol and diesel prices by Rs 7.50 a litre each, LPG rates by Rs 89 per cylinder and CNG by Rs 6 per kg - much lower than the increase seen in major economies around the globe.

The response reflected a playbook honed over decades: absorb global shocks first and shield consumers for as long as possible. That came at a cost. Even as IOC, BPCL and HPCL await full government compensation for selling subsidised cooking gas in 2025-26, they chose to hold petrol and diesel prices steady through more than three months of turmoil in West Asia, sacrificing earnings to cushion consumers. According to Crisil Ratings, the three state-run retailers are estimated to have incurred net under-recoveries of Rs 40,000-45,000 crore between March and May, after accounting for inventory gains - almost equivalent to their combined annual profits.

Private-sector fuel retailers, by contrast, passed on higher costs more quickly. Companies, such as Nayara Energy and Shell, raised pump prices by a steeper margin during the period, industry officials said.

Industry officials said India could have faced a very different situation had either BPCL or HPCL, which together account for roughly half of the country's fuel retail network and around a quarter of sales each, been privatised under the government's disinvestment plans in the early 2000s or again two decades later.

Unlike state-owned firms, private owners would have been under little obligation to sell petrol, diesel or LPG below market prices or absorb prolonged under-recoveries in the national interest, they said.

"What that would have meant for a country as dependent on imported oil as India can only be imagined," one official said, arguing that public ownership has enabled the companies to prioritise energy security over profitability during successive crises.

Together, IOC, BPCL and HPCL account for nearly 90 per cent of the country's fuel retail network, operate most of its refining capacity, maintain extensive pipeline infrastructure and supply petroleum products to every corner of the country, including remote regions where private operators often have little commercial incentive to serve.

Their nationwide footprint also enables governments to rapidly execute emergency policy decisions. Whether distributing subsidised LPG cylinders during the pandemic, ensuring diesel availability during natural disasters or managing inventories during periods of global supply disruption, public sector companies have often functioned as an extension of the state's crisis-response machinery.

That strategic role has repeatedly complicated efforts to privatise them.

With India importing more than 88 per cent of its crude oil requirements and geopolitical disruptions becoming more frequent, policymakers increasingly view energy resilience as a strategic capability rather than simply a commercial business.

For investors, state ownership can sometimes constrain profitability through government-directed interventions. For policymakers, however, the same ownership provides something difficult to replicate through markets alone: an integrated nationwide energy network that can be mobilised at short notice when a crisis strikes. —PTI

SALAR ساہر

Can Lebanon disarm Hezbollah as part of deal?

Hezbollah's leader on Saturday criticized a framework agreement that Israel and Lebanon signed a day earlier to end months of conflict between the Iran-backed militant group and Israel, raising concerns about its effectiveness.

The agreement signed Friday in Washington links Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon to Hezbollah's disarmament, something the group rejects.

Several previous ceasefire agreements that Lebanon has negotiated with Israel since the outbreak of the latest Israel-Hezbollah war were never implemented on the ground. More than 4,000 people in Lebanon have been killed in Israeli strikes since March, when Hezbollah fired at Israel two days after the Iran war began. In a statement Saturday, Hezbollah leader Naim Kassem said his group will keep fighting until Israel is forced to leave Lebanon. The group's supporters protested in the streets of Beirut following the announcement of the agreement.

Despite the deal, the Lebanese state news agency reported an Israeli drone strike near the southern city of Nabatiyeh. It also reported that Israel's military released three Lebanese and three Syrian workers who were taken near the southern village of Ain Arab on Friday.

DEAL CALLS ON ISRAEL TO WITHDRAW BUT ONLY IF HEZBOLLAH DISARMS

The talks between Israel and Lebanon were separate from the interim deal signed earlier this month by the US and Iran.

Details of the deal that the US State Department released Saturday say Lebanon and Israel aim to eventually end the state of war between them that began when Israel was created in 1948.

The deal says Israel will withdraw from Lebanon, provided Hezbollah disarms.

It calls for Israel to initially withdraw from two small areas, called pilot zones. It did not say where they will be. The Lebanese army will gradually assume full security responsibility over those areas. The countries will agree to future pilot zones for Israel's withdrawal in the future, the agreement says. The deal has a security annex that includes details of the deployment of the Lebanese army and redeployments of Israeli troops. The security annex was not made public.

As part of the deal, Israel stresses that Hezbollah's disarmament throughout Lebanon and additional security measures to be agreed upon between the countries will eliminate any future need for the Israeli army's military action or presence in Lebanon.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a statement said Israeli forces will remain in southern Lebanon "until Hezbollah and the rest of the terrorist organizations are disarmed, and until no further threat to Israel is posed from Lebanon." Netanyahu said the two agreed-upon zones will have a "pilot program for disarming Hezbollah and transferring the territory to the control of the Lebanese army." He said Israel's military already withdrew from one.

Israel's Defense Minister Israel Katz said the military has been instructed "to prepare for an extended stay."

Hezbollah's leader rejects the deal as a humiliation

From Hezbollah's point of view, the deal is nonexistent, Kassem said.

He called the agreement a "humiliation," adding that linking Israel's withdrawal to Hezbollah's disarmament as a "very dangerous suggestion."

The deal prompted one of the group's officials, Hassan Fadlallah, to warn that it could result in civil war because Hezbollah won't give up its weapons and will resist any measures taken by the Lebanese army. Judge Ahmed Rami al-Hajj, Lebanon's top public prosecutor, on Saturday told the heads of the country's security agencies to take measures to prevent riots.

SOME ISRAELIS AND LEBANESE DOUBT THE DEAL WILL LAST

The deal says both Lebanon and Israel recognize that the restoration of security in southern Lebanon through the deployment of the Lebanese army, the safe return of its civilian population and the security of Israel's northern communities are essential to long-term stability and peace.

"Personally, I don't think it will be lasting because the Lebanese military cannot really stand a chance against Hezbollah," said Israeli citizen Ronit Belson while visiting the town of Metula along the border.

IN LEBANON, PEOPLE WERE DIVIDED

"People just want to rest for good. I support the Lebanese authorities in the decision" taken, said Rabie Sammour, a resident of the southern city of Sidon.

Another Sidon resident, Khaled Ghannoum, said the deal "legitimized Israel's occupation."

In an apparent reference to Iran, which has sent billions of dollars in cash to Hezbollah over the past four decades, the deal says Lebanon and the U.S. commit to preventing funds from flowing to any entity, organization or individual affiliated with non-state armed groups.

The deal states that the Lebanese government explicitly commits to prevent reconstruction funds from flowing to non-state armed groups and connected entities. —PTI

People run in front of burning cars attacked in an Israeli airstrike in the southern port city of Sidon, Lebanon – PTI

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Another T20 World Cup setback leaves uncomfortable questions

India's elimination from the Women's T20 World Cup has inevitably put Harmanpreet Kaur's future as captain under scrutiny, and one thing appears certain - the team is staring at a reset.

The six-wicket defeat to Australia on Sunday that knocked India out of contention for the semifinals only brought into sharp focus what had become increasingly evident - the women in Blue, despite being pre-tournament favourites, were a side still searching for answers.

It was a second successive T20 World Cup under Harmanpreet's leadership in which India failed to reach the knockouts, reviving uncomfortable questions about the team's direction in the format.

"Rethink" was the word both Harmanpreet and head coach Amol Muzumdar used after the campaign ended. The need for a reset is difficult to ignore.

TIME UP FOR HARMANPREET AS T20I CAPTAIN?

Less than a year after leading India to their maiden ODI World Cup title, Harmanpreet finds herself at another crossroads.

The 37-year-old remains India's most successful T20I captain and one of the defining figures of Indian women's cricket. But yet another disappointing T20 World Cup campaign has brought her future in the shortest format into focus.

MUZUMDAR, HOWEVER, HAS BACKED THE VETERAN.

"It's up to the selectors to decide the captain. I think, yes. My short and sweet answer would be yes," he said when asked if Harmanpreet would continue as captain.

But it is hard to ignore that under her leadership, the team underperformed in all three departments in England.

India entered the tournament without a settled combination, continued to shuffle personnel and batting positions, and frequently appeared reactive rather than proactive in pressure situations.

Whether she continues as captain would ultimately depend on how the selectors interpret India's latest World Cup failure.

Since the 2024 T20 World Cup, the India skipper has crossed the fifty-run mark only four times in 24 innings, underlining her inconsistent form.

Her fighting knock against Australia, played with India's campaign hanging by a thread, was a reminder of her class and ability to rise on the biggest occasions. Yet, it remained her only substantial contribution with the bat in the tournament.

Harmanpreet Kaur —PTI

UNSETTLED COMBINATIONS

For a team carrying serious title ambitions, India spent an alarming amount of time trying to identify their best XI.

Questions over the pace attack, middle-order composition, and all-round options remained unresolved even in the latter stages of the tournament.

The team used multiple seam attacks during the five group games. Nandani Sharma and Kranti Gaud played three matches each, while Renuka Singh and Arundhati Reddy featured in only two games apiece.

Injuries to pace-bowling all-rounder Amanjot Kaur and off-spinner Shreyanka Patil compounded the woes.

While Muzumdar defended the bowling unit by pointing to a lack of experience, India's struggles cannot be attributed solely to that.

Of the eight frontline bowlers in the squad, four have played more than 50 T20Is.

Ironically, one of the least experienced among them, left-arm spinner Shree Charani, emerged as India's standout bowler with 14 wickets in five matches at an economy rate of 5.85.

The limited use of an experienced campaigner like Renuka also raised questions.

DEFENSIVE APPROACH

India have spoken repeatedly about adopting a fearless brand of cricket, but their approach often appeared conservative.

The middle overs remained an area of concern as the batting unit frequently lost momentum after the powerplay.

Yastika Bhatia and Jemimah Rodrigues, who were expected to form the backbone of the middle order alongside Harmanpreet, endured disappointing campaigns.

Neither batter is known for power-hitting, yet India persisted with both. While Jemimah batted at No. 3 during the England series preceding the World Cup, Yastika was promoted to one down in the ICC event.

The tactical confusion was evident in the must-win clash against Australia.

Jemimah, who struggled to find boundaries consistently, was sent in at No. 3 when India required a batter to go on with an aggressive intent.

The inability of the middle order to accelerate invariably left Richa Ghosh and Deepti Sharma with too much to do in too little time throughout the campaign.

The episode underlined India's reluctance to take risks against stronger oppositions, preferring consolidation over aggression.

Perhaps the larger concern is that even after four seasons of the Women's Premier League, no middle-order batter has mounted a strong challenge to established players.

POOR FIELDING

"Catches win matches" remains one of cricket's oldest adages, and India learned that lesson the hard way, once again, as their ordinary fielding proved to be one of the biggest reasons behind early exit.

India dropped as many as 10 catches, the third-worst tally among all teams.

The most damaging lapses came against South Africa as Marizanne Kapp, who was dropped thrice, guided them to a crucial victory.

There were missed opportunities against Bangladesh too with four dropped catches in the first five overs of the contest. Misfields and lapses in the deep repeatedly allowed opponents to recover from difficult situations. —PTI

— ANI

Pak's Geo News apologises for Muharram docu

ISLAMABAD, 29 JUNE

Pakistani broadcaster Geo News issued an apology on Sunday for airing a documentary, after being handed a 15-day suspension the previous day. The channel stated it "acknowledged an editorial error regarding content aired during its 10th Muharram transmission," referring to the sacred month of Muharram. The programme, titled "Safar-e-Ishq," showed "certain rituals practiced by a limited number of people in Iraq and some other Middle Eastern countries," but did not specify the rituals. Pakistan's media watchdog, PEMRA, said the broadcast "constitutes a serious regulatory concern," as such visuals "were liable to hurt religious sentiments and disturb public peace," especially during Muharram. The documentary's content remains undisclosed. —*PTI*

Pritam re-elected as S'pore Workers' Party Chief

SINGAPORE, 29 JUNE

The Workers' Party of Singapore re-elected Pritam Singh as its Secretary General on Sunday, despite facing legal and political challenges, including a conviction for lying to Parliament. Singh, 50, was re-elected unopposed by party members and previously lost his title of Leader of the Opposition during his legal case. The party holds 12 seats, including two 'Non-Constituency' MPs, while the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) controls 87 seats. Singh stated, "The party understands that its purpose is to behave in a rational and responsible way, and represent Singaporeans faithfully." He has been the party's secretary-general since 2018 and an MP since 2011. —*PTI*

3 firefighters killed in Colorado wildfires

BEAVER, 29 JUNE

Three firefighters died, and two sustained burns fighting wildfires near the Colorado-Utah border, the US Interior Department reported. The firefighters, part of the US Wildland Fire Service and Forest Service, deployed emergency shelters during a burnover on Saturday in Mesa County, Colorado, as flames from the Knowles and Gore fires, which merged into the Snyder Fire, advanced rapidly. The fires have burnt about 44 square miles (114sqkm). The names of the fallen firefighters are withheld pending family notifications. The fire, driven by strong winds and high temperatures, continues to threaten areas with evacuation orders issued. The wildfire activity across the Western US remains intense due to dry, windy conditions. —*PTI*

29 killed in Pakistan's strikes on Afghan

Over 163 injured; Pak claims those killed were militants, Taliban says civilians attacked

Pakistan's security forces allegedly conducted a ground operation in Bajaur district near the Afghan border on 28 June before carrying out cross-border strikes —*ANI*

ISLAMABAD, 29 JUNE

Pakistan on Monday said at least 29 militants were killed in intelligence-based ground operations and precision strikes along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, even as the Taliban government accused Islamabad of launching airstrikes that killed and wounded at least 163 civilians in eastern Afghanistan.

Pakistan summoned Afghanistan's charge d'affaires in Islamabad over the recent attack on a Pakistan Rangers headquarters in Karachi, alleging Afghan nationals and their territory were used to facilitate the assault. JuA, a faction that rejoined the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in 2024, claimed responsibility.

Afghanistan, in turn, summoned Pakistan's charge d'affaires in Kabul to protest what it alleged were Pakistani air strikes on civilian homes in Kunar, Paktia and Paktika provinces in violation of its airspace and sovereignty.

Pakistan's Information Minister Atta Tarar said the operation targeted hideouts of Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA) and Fitna al Khwarij in response to recent terrorist attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and the Pakistan Rangers headquarters in Karachi.

According to Tarar, security forces conducted a ground operation in Bajaur district near the Afghan border on 28 June before carrying out calibrated cross-border strikes under Operation Ghazab lil-Haq. He said three militant camps in Afghanistan's Paktia, Paktika and Kunar provinces were destroyed, killing 25 militants and destroying large quantities of weapons and ammunition.

Pakistan also summoned Afghanistan's chargé d'affaires and lodged a strong protest, alleging that Afghan nationals, including one arrested attacker, had participated in the Karachi assault. Islamabad reiterated its accusation that Afghan territory was being used to launch attacks against Pakistan.

The Taliban administration rejected Pakistan's justification, with spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid condemning the strikes as a "cowardly act of aggression". He said Pakistani aircraft bombed the eastern provinces of Paktika, Paktia and Kunar, causing heavy civilian casualties.

The latest cross-border strikes are expected to deepen tensions between Islamabad and Kabul, despite Chinese-mediated talks in April aimed at reducing hostilities. Border clashes have intensified since February, when Pakistan launched Operation Ghazab lil-Haq, with both sides accusing each other of backing militant attacks. —*PTI*

IRAN SAYS QATAR WILL RELEASE ITS $6B FROZEN ASSETS

DUBAI/TEHRAN, 29 JUNE

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Monday said USD 6 billion in frozen Iranian assets held in Qatar would be released, even as renewed military tensions across the Persian Gulf cast uncertainty over planned negotiations with the United States.

Pezeshkian described the interim agreement with Washington as "a great victory for the Iranian people", saying half of Iran's USD 12 billion in frozen funds in Qatar would be returned. However, he gave no timeline, while US officials said no assets had yet been released and Qatar has not confirmed any transfer.

The announcement comes as US-Iran technical talks, mediated by Qatar and Pakistan, are expected to resume in Doha on Tuesday despite recent hostilities.

Separately, senior adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Akbar Velayati issued a "serious warning" to Bahrain, threatening harsher military action if the kingdom continued what Tehran described as hostile actions.

Bahrain condemned the attacks on its territory, saying they violated its sovereignty and undermined regional stability. —*PTI*

ISRAELI STRIKE KILLS 3 IN GAZA

DEIR AL-BALAH, 29 JUNE

An Israeli airstrike killed at least three Palestinians, including a child, in the Gaza Strip on Monday, after hitting a tent sheltering displaced people that Israel said housed a militant.

Health authorities in the coastal enclave said the strike hit a neighbourhood in Deir al-Balah, one of the least damaged towns in central Gaza. Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital said the fatalities were two men and an 8-year-old while a third man was wounded. Israel's military identified the target as Zaher Abu Salem, who it said was a member of Islamic Jihad and was involved in the October 7, 2023, attack on Israel. —*PTI*

Israel dismantles Hezbollah terror complex

TEL AVIV, 29 JUNE

The Israeli military on Monday said it had dismantled a major underground Hezbollah tunnel complex in southern Lebanon, destroying what it described as a significant terrorist infrastructure built with Iranian support.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said the tunnel, located near the village of Majdal Zoun within the security zone in southern Lebanon, stretched more than 200 metres in length and extended over 25 metres underground.

According to the IDF, troops discovered hundreds of weapons and four launch shafts directed towards Israeli territory inside the complex before destroying it as part of Operation Closing Verse.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz said the tunnel had been intended to launch attacks against Israel and its citizens. They added that Israel had informed the United States and the American representative in Lebanon before carrying out the operation. —*ANI*

'WHAT A LOSER!' BIDEN CALLS OUT TRUMP'S 'NARCISSISM'

What a loser. The Reflecting Pool reflects something even worse than the narcissism and incompetence at the core of this administration. It's the corruption, the corruption! The brazen, blatant corruption! Corruption on a scale never seen before in American history in any administration. Trump has made billions of dollars in his return to the White House. It's simply stunning to me. He has no shame. And frankly, it is embarrassing for the country. But Trump? Trump could care less -Joe Biden, former US president

PUTIN ADMITS RUSSIA IS FACING FUEL CRUNCH

MOSCOW, 29 JUNE

President Vladimir Putin acknowledged for the first time on Sunday that Russia was facing a "certain deficit" of fuel and vowed to strengthen protection of oil facilities and boost fuel output.

This comes after Ukraine's drone strikes set fire to a major oil refinery in Slavyansk-na-Kubani, east of occupied Crimea. The facility is one of southern Russia's major refineries, processing close to 4 million tons of crude per year. Zelenskyy also claimed that another Russian refinery, in the Yaroslavl region around 700 kilometers (435 miles) from the Ukrainian border, was hit during the nighttime strikes.

Ukraine has markedly stepped up its long-range attacks on Russian military industries and energy facilities in recent months. Kyiv called the attacks fair retribution for Russia's near-daily barrages on Ukrainian civilians and energy infrastructure since its February 2022 offensive.

The campaign has choked Russian fuel supplies, causing widespread shortages and prompting authorities in many regions to introduce fuel rationing. According to Western analysts, it has also slowed Moscow's efforts on the battlefield, heaping pressure on the Kremlin to come to the negotiating table.

Speaking to a Russian state TV reporter, Putin described the Ukrainian attacks as an attempt to "cause a split in Russian society and force Russia to halt."

Putin also said that Russia will import more fuel and speed up repair works at oil facilities to end the "temporary deficit."

"All damaged facilities are being restored quite quickly, and the issues that arise are not critical," he said.

Putin specifically pledged to quickly deal with fuel shortages in Crimea as well. —*Salar News*

Vanuatu's PM Jotham Napat and Australian PM Anthony Albanese during a signing ceremony in Canberra on Monday—*ANI*

Aus-Vanuatu pact blocks China's military base

MELBOURNE, 29 JUNE

Australia and Vanuatu signed a long-awaited bilateral security and economic treaty on Monday that prevents China from creating a military base on the South Pacific island nation.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese signed the Nakamal Agreement with his Vanuatu counterpart Jotham Napat in the Australian capital nine months after the Vanuatuan government rejected an earlier draft.

Albanese called Australia Vanuatu's largest and most comprehensive partner, while Natap said the pact reaffirmed both countries' commitment to strengthening their ties.

The deal is part of Australia's efforts to counter China's growing security influence in the region. Under the deal, Vanuatu will bar foreign military bases, consult Australia on critical infrastructure decisions, and turn first to Australia, New Zealand and France in disasters. It will prioritise policing ties with Pacific Islands Forum members, though Chinese police, who visit periodically, are not excluded. —*PTI*

Mexico's 'Batman' hunts bike thieves, leaves them taped

MEXICO CITY, 29 JUNE

Forget the Bat-Signal — one Mexican city appears to have its own real-life Batman.

A mysterious vigilante dubbed the "Batman of Lagos de Moreno" has become the subject of a police manhunt after allegedly hunting down suspected motorbike thieves, duct-taping them to lamp posts and leaving their recovered motorcycles beside them as evidence.

Since 13 June, at least five men have reportedly been found bound to street poles in Lagos de Moreno, Jalisco. Some were allegedly left tied up for more than 10 days before being discovered.

Photos circulating on social media show the men with the Spanish word ratero ("thief") written on their foreheads (**in pic**), along with painted moustaches and cat whiskers. In one case, two men were taped back-to-back beneath a bright pink sign detailing their alleged offences.

Police are searching for the vigilante. The unusual incidents come as Mexico continues to battle organised crime, with more than 30,000 crime-related deaths reported each year. —*Salar News*

Dad, son pulled alive from Venezuelan rubble after being trapped for 96 hours

A father & his son were pulled alive from the rubble of a building in La Guaira, Venezuela—*SCREENGRAB*

LA GUARIA, 29 JUNE

Four days after twin earthquakes devastated Venezuela's northern coast, rescuers pulled survivors from the rubble Sunday, including a father and his son. Seperately, a 18-day-old baby reunited with its mother.

In the days since Wednesday's devastating 7.2 and 7.5 quakes, search teams and locals had believed that there were no signs of life under the concrete mass in La Guaira state, one of the hardest-hit areas.

On Sunday, rescue teams from Virginia, France and Venezuela pulled a dust-coated man from rubble after four days, his body slack but still clutching his phone. His young son followed, shirtless, nearly unresponsive, passed hand over hand through a crowd to a waiting ambulance as teams chanted "slow, slow, gentle, gentle" in Spanish and English before breaking into applause.

Rescuers also pulled a newborn and his mother, Dayana Patiño, alive from the rubble of an eight-story collapsed apartment building in La Guaira.

With 1,450 confirmed dead and hope dimming, the rescue offered a rare moment of relief. —*PTI*

'KIDS CAN STILL USE THE APPS'

Aus to double fines on Insta, Facebook over under-16 accounts

MELBOURNE, 29 JUNE

Australia is set to double maximum fines for social media platforms that fail to prevent children from holding accounts, with the penalty rising to AU$99 million ($68 million). Communications Minister Anika Wells blamed platforms' resistance to age restrictions for the need to toughen laws that came into force on 10 December, 2024.

The government announced Sunday it would introduce draft legislation into Parliament this week to double the maximum fine to 99 million Australian dollars ($68 million) for platforms that fail to take reasonable steps to prevent children from holding accounts.

Parliament passed the initial legislation with overwhelming support in 2024. The targeted platforms were given more than 12 months to plan to implement the ban.

Parliament had passed the initial under-16s ban with overwhelming support in 2024, giving platforms over 12 months to prepare. While the government initially reported more than 5 million children's accounts were removed or restricted, eSafety found in March that seven in ten children who held accounts on restricted platforms on 10 December remained on them.

The draft legislation, to be introduced this week, would also expand eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant's powers to demand information from platforms and third parties, including age-assurance technology providers, to verify compliance. Grant had previously signalled potential court action against platforms not taking reasonable steps to exclude children. Senior opposition lawmaker Jane Hume indicated her party would likely support the reforms, acknowledging the original ban was failing due to insufficient enforcement powers. —*PTI*

China imposes export controls on 40 Japanese entities

TAIPEI, 29 JUNE

China imposed new export controls Monday on 40 Japanese entities it says are contributing to the country's "remilitarisation," as tensions with Tokyo continue to rise.

Twenty Japanese entities, including multiple divisions of Mitsubishi Corporation, have been placed on a control list, which prohibits Chinese and foreign exporters from selling to them items for both civil and military purposes made in China. Chinese companies exporting to these firms will be required to apply for special licenses, submit risk assessment reports on the Japanese companies and written pledges that the dual-use items will not be used for military purposes. "China's measures are entirely justified, reasonable and lawful. They are aimed at firmly deterring Japan's reckless pursuit of new militarism,'" read the Chinese Commerce Ministry statement. —*PTI*

Pristine Logistics files confidential IPO with SEBI

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Rail-focused logistics firm Pristine Logistics & Infraprojects Ltd has submitted a confidential preliminary IPO filing to Sebi, seeking to raise funds through an initial public offering. The proposed IPO is expected to raise between Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,200 crore, aiming for a valuation of around USD 500 million. It said, "The pre-filed draft red herring prospectus has been submitted in relation to the IPO." Founded in 2008, Pristine Logistics operates a rail-centric multimodal platform, offering cargo transport, warehousing, and logistics services across India. The company has expanded its terminal network from 8 to 12, with increased TEU and tonne volumes, and plans new terminals in Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Karnataka, including port-based and inland facilities. —*PTI*

Bajaj announces ₹ 5,632 cr share buyback

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Bajaj Auto Ltd will commence a Rs 5,632.8 crore share buyback from 1 July, 2026, involving up to 46.94 lakh fully paid-up equity shares at Rs 12,000 each. The buyback was approved by the board on 6 May and ratified by shareholders via postal ballot on 14 May, with results announced on 18 June. The company stated, "The buyback reinforces the company's commitment to its shareholders by returning surplus cash in an effective manner." The buyback will close on 7 July. Bajaj Auto highlighted that its strong cash flow and balance sheet enable it to reward shareholders while maintaining capital for growth and investments. —*PTI*

NETFLIX TO REQUIRE UNIQUE EMAIL ID FOR PROFILE LOGIN

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Netflix users accessing the platform as add-on members on someone else's account may encounter login issues due to a new rule.

The streaming giant now requires each profile under a Netflix subscription to have a unique email address. The change, which began rolling out on 16 June 2026, is permanent, according to a Netflix spokesperson.

Several users have reported seeing a pop-up asking them to add an email address to their profile to continue. The requirement does not apply to child profiles, according to a report by Ars Technica.

The update could make it easier for secondary account users to manage their own credentials, log into new devices, or use two-factor authentication.

However, the new change has also drawn criticism. Users who share a single device — such as a living room TV — and use multiple profiles on the same account say the new requirement is inconvenient. Others have raised privacy concerns. —*Agencies*

Eternal, Swiggy lose $15B to Amazon's 10-min delivery

Flipkart gains too; Swiggy shares fall 47%, Eternal 28%

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Eternal and Swiggy have lost over USD 15 billion in market value following the entry of retail giants Amazon and Walmart-owned Flipkart into India's 10-minute delivery market, raising investor concerns about a prolonged battle for market share.

According to a Bloomberg report, shares of Eternal, Blinkit's parent company, have fallen about 28 per cent from their all-time high in October 2025. Meanwhile, Swiggy's shares have slipped approximately 47 per cent from September 2025.

The market correction has also hit unlisted players. Shares of Zepto, which was planning to raise USD 1 billion through a proposed IPO, have declined more than 32 per cent in the unlisted market since February.

The US-based giants, Amazon and Flipkart, have been opening dark stores — warehouses located close to consumers to enable deliveries within minutes.

Amazon is now expanding its Amazon Now service to more than 300 cities and towns across India. Flipkart Minutes has around 1,000 dark stores across 130 cities, which could rise to around 1,500 stores in more than 180 cities soon. Reliance Retail, through JioMart, is also entering the market through its 3,100 stores spread across over 1,200 cities, said the report.

Analysts said they expect "rising and persistent competitive intensity for years, not quarters" from these players.

To stay competitive, Blinkit and Swiggy may need to spend more on opening new warehouses, expanding delivery networks and offering deeper discounts to customers — investments that are likely to weigh on the company's near-term profitability.

"The challenge right now is that the competition is really high, so near-term profitability is depressed. The risk is the duration of the competitive intensity," said Franklin Templeton fund manager Yi Ping Liao in the Bloomberg report.

According to an Emkay report, the sector is in a "land-grab phase," with companies focusing on growth over profits.

The issue at the moment is not which company can grow the fastest, but which one can build a profitable business at the same time, the report states. —*Salar News*

The issue at the moment is if each quick commerce platflorm can all build profitable businesses –*AI*

AMID NAGARRO ACQUISITION

Persistent Systems shares tank by nearly 11%

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Shares of Persistent Systems tumbled nearly 11 per cent on Monday after the firm announced a takeover of German digital engineering company Nagarro, a deal that will create a combined entity with a USD 2.9 billion revenue run-rate.

The stock tanked 10.91 per cent to Rs 4,312.15 — the 52-week low — on the BSE.

At the NSE, the firm's shares dropped 10.93 per cent to hit a 52-week low of Rs 4,312.

Persistent and Nagarro are a "perfect strategic fit", combining Persistent's AI-led engineering leadership, North American scale and partnership depth with Nagarro's European business, complementary verticals, AI expertise, and ERP and CX (customer experience) delivery, according to a release on Saturday.

The combination would be a USD 2.9 billion AI-led engineering juggernaut with 46,000-plus employees in more than 40 countries, including about 37,000 in India, nearly 3,500 in North America, and around 3,000 in Europe, the release said.

Galaxy Germany Holding SE, a wholly-owned direct subsidiary of Persistent Systems Ltd, announced a voluntary public takeover offer for all outstanding shares in Nagarro SE at a cash consideration of EUR 81 per share, it said.

The offer follows the signing of a Business Combination Agreement, it said.

Munich-headquartered Nagarro is a digital engineering firm with 18,500 employees across over 40 countries, a presence across industrial, consumer, TMT, and BFSI verticals, and total revenue of EUR 1 billion (CY25). —*PTI*

- Persistent Systems stock hit a 52 week low, tanking 10.91 per cent to Rs 4,312.15 on the BSE.

Mkts fall as geopolitical tensions unnerve investors

MUMBAI/ NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Monday as renewed hostilities between the US and Iran and rising oil prices unnerved investors.

Brent crude jumped 1.51 per cent to USD 73.09 per barrel.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 372.10 points (-0.48 per cent) to settle at 76,728.37. During the day, it tanked 478.72 points (-0.62 per cent) to 76,621.75. The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 109.75 points (-0.46 per cent) to end at 23,946.25.

Stock markets were closed on Friday for Muharram. On Thursday, the Sensex settled 109.25 points (+0.14 per cent) higher at 77,100.47. The Nifty rose by 34.35 points (+0.14 per cent) to end at 24,056.

TURTLEMINT SHARES DROP 11 PC IN MARKET DEBUT

Shares of Turtlemint Fintech Solutions listed at a discount of over 11 per cent against the issue price of Rs 152 on Monday.

On the BSE, the stock opened at Rs 136.20, down 10.39 per cent from the issue price, and fell further to Rs 132.15, a decline of 13 per cent. On the NSE, it opened at Rs 134.90, a discount of 11.25 per cent. The company's market capitalisation stood at Rs 4,069.70 crore.

The Rs 883-crore IPO, priced at Rs 144-152 per share, was subscribed 1.20 times on the final day of bidding last Tuesday —*PTI*

Kotak Mahindra Bank shares down over 3 pc

Shares of Kotak Mahindra Bank fell over 3 per cent on Monday after MD and CEO Ashok Vaswani said he will not seek re-appointment when his term ends on 31 December.

The stock slipped 3.14 per cent to Rs 396.15 on the BSE and 3.19 per cent to Rs 395.95 on the NSE.

On saturday, the bank said Vaswani informed the board that he does not wish to seek re-appointment for personal reasons. Vaswani assumed charge on 1 January 2024, completing three years. He previously worked with Barclays and Citigroup.

UNDER RS 30 LAKH

Delhi waives off electric car taxes from 1 July

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

All electric cars with an ex-showroom price of Rs 30 lakh or less registered in the national capital will be granted 100 per cent exemption on road tax and registration fees, as the Delhi government approved a new EV policy on Monday.

Under the new policy, people buying electric two-wheelers will get a subsidy of Rs 30,000 in the first year, Rs 20,000 in the second year and Rs 10,000 in the third year.

Addressing a press conference, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said that around Rs 15,000 crore will be invested under the new policy over the next four years to promote electric mobility and reduce vehicular pollution in the national capital.

The policy, approved by the Delhi Cabinet, will come into effect from 1 July, Gupta said, describing it as a major step towards making Delhi a pollution-free city by 31 March 2030.

Gupta said that the new policy lays special emphasis on the transport sector and provides a roadmap for the phased transition from conventional fuel-powered vehicles to electric vehicles.

The government said the policy also envisages expansion of charging infrastructure, vehicle scrapping facilities and other measures to accelerate the transition to electric mobility across the city.—*PTI*

The policy, approved by the Delhi Cabinet, will come into effect from 1 July, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said, describing it as a major step towards making Delhi a pollution-free city by 31 March 2030 –*MAGNIFIC*

Judge must approve dismissal: US lawyer on Adani-DOJ case

NAXOS, 29 JUNE

A US legal expert has described the court's recent order regarding the Department of Justice's (DOJ) motion to dismiss the Adani Group indictment as a routine procedural step.

Chris Man, a partner at the prominent law firm Steptoe, noted that such judicial oversight is standard practice, rather than an indication of a major legal hurdle.

Addressing whether the court could effectively block the DOJ's request, Man emphasised the constitutional limits of judicial intervention in prosecutorial decisions.

The Adani Group has argued the case is fundamentally flawed, saying the transactions involved non-US entities, were governed by English law, and fell outside US securities law.

It also said the bribery allegations lacked merit, citing expert testimony.

Legal sources familiar with the matter suggest that the order may actually fast-track the resolution, as the court has mandated that the US government submit a formal response by 13 July. —*ANI*

Zerodha to expand into investment banking

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Online brokerage firm Zerodha has applied to capital markets regulator Sebi for a merchant banking licence as it looks to expand its financial services offerings.

The application was filed through its wholly-owned subsidiary Zerodha Corporate Advisors Pvt Ltd, according to Sebi records.

The application, submitted on 27 April, is currently under review.

If the licence is granted, Zerodha will be able to manage Initial Public Offerings (IPOs), advise companies on fundraising, and offer other merchant banking services.

Currently, the broking house has over 1.6 crore customers, who place billions of orders every year.

Apart from its brokerage business, Zerodha manages its own mutual fund operations through Zerodha AMC.

Moreover, 12 more applications, including those from InCred Capital Financial Services, Neo Wealth Management and Societe Generale Securities India, have been filed with Sebi seeking clearance for a merchant banking licence, the regulator's website showed.

In December 2025, Sebi amended rules governing merchant bankers, revising net worth and liquid net worth requirements and introducing a framework for segregating activities through separate business units. —*PTI*

FIRMS CAN AVOID PENALTIES FOR FIRST-TIME VIOLATIONS

British American Tobacco to cut 9,000 jobs

LONDON, 29 JUNE

British American Tobacco is set to cut nearly 9,000 jobs as part of a restructuring to boost productivity through AI.

The company will eliminate 5,500 roles and outsource 3,500 positions to third parties, targeting annual savings of USD 793 million by 2028. The restructuring reflects a strategic shift towards vapes and nicotine pouches as low cigarette sales weigh on profits.

BAT is also contending with illegal trade in South Africa, where it is closing a facility due to volume losses. The company has partnered with Accenture to streamline processes and enhance compliance. Shares fell 1.7 per cent on Monday. —*ANI*

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

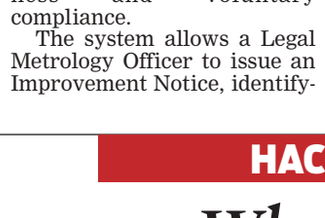
The government has introduced an Improvement Notice mechanism under the Legal Metrology Act, 2009, enabling businesses to correct specified first-time procedural and regulatory violations before facing penalties.

The Department of Consumer Affairs announced this reform through the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2026, aiming to promote ease of doing business and voluntary compliance.

The system allows a Legal Metrology Officer to issue an Improvement Notice, identifying deficiencies and providing time for correction.

If rectified within the period, penalties can be avoided; repeated violations will still attract enforcement.

The government emphasised that consumer protection remains strict, with the reform reflecting the vision of "Minimum Government, Maximum Governance" to create a transparent and business-friendly environment via policy. —*ANI*



HACKING VIA ATTACHMENTS

CERT-In warns WhatsApp web users of malware drive

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

An Indian cybersecurity agency, the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), has warned that a number of WhatsApp Web and Desktop app users are being targeted for hacking through malicious VBScript (.vbs) attachments on the platform.

The hacked accounts are being used to further distribute malware to trusted contacts, gaining remote unauthorised access to and compromising the devices the service is being used on.

The 25 June announcement warned users to be careful about such attachments no matter who they're coming from, as a result, and a lack of caution could lead to fraud, malware deployment, network infection, disruption of business, and financial losses.

The danger is higher when using WhatsApp on computers, as while mobile phone operating systems use the 'sandboxing' method to keep harmful files contained, using the platform on Desktop or Web can expose the system administrator's full credentials.

Security company Kaspersky said in a post on its website that the highest number of affected victims are located in Malaysia, and that people in Brazil, Singapore, Taiwan and Vietnam have also fallen prey to the campaign.

"The use of multiple languages in file names also points to broad regional targeting, especially across Europe," the post said, adding that its Global Research and Analysis Team (GReAT) first came across the issue in June 2026.

CERT-In has warned against opening unexpected attachments received on the messaging service. The cybersecurity firm, on 10 June, had also suggested additional security compliance for mobile devices for manufacturers. —*PTI*

The 25 June announcement by the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team warned users of threat actors using compromised WhatsApp accounts to send malicious attachments directly to victims –*ANI*

World Cup Group stages rewrite record books

NEW YORK, 29 JUNE

The group stage of the FIFA World Cup 2026 concluded after thrilling action, with the expanded 48-team tournament producing record-breaking numbers both on and off the pitch across co-host nations Canada, Mexico and the United States.

The first-ever 48-team FIFA World Cup brought together more nations, players and fans than any previous edition, with 72 group-stage matches played across 16 host cities, showcasing the tournament's expanded global reach.

According to FIFA, a total of 4,644,549 spectators attended matches during the group stage, while fans consumed around 300,000 hot dogs across the venues. FIFA noted that if the hot dogs sold were placed end to end, they would stretch approximately 28 miles (45 kilometres) -- roughly the distance between New York, New Jersey Stadium and John F Kennedy International Airport.

The body also said the tournament featured 1,248 players representing 48 nations, with 999 players making appearances during the group stage. The tournament now moves into the knockout stage after a group phase that rewrote several records and marked the beginning of the biggest FIFA World Cup in history.

A total of 32 teams have qualified for the knockout stage of the FIFA World Cup 2026, with 13 teams from UEFA, nine from CAF, five from CONMEBOL, three from Concacaf, and two from the AFC progressing beyond the group stage.

According to FIFA, the 2026 edition has set a new benchmark for African representation in the knockout rounds. Nine CAF nations advanced to the Round of 32, marking the highest number of African teams ever to reach the knockout stage of a FIFA World Cup.

Among the debutants, Cabo Verde were the only side to remain unbeaten during the group stage while advancing to the knockout phase. Kevin Pina also etched his name into the country's football history by scoring Cabo Verde's first-ever FIFA World Cup goal in the group-stage match against Uruguay.

The group stage produced a record-breaking 215 goals across 72 matches, averaging three goals per game, setting a new tournament record, according to FIFA. By comparison, a total of 172 goals were scored during the entire FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

France, Germany and the Netherlands finished as the highest-scoring teams in the group stage with 10 goals each.

FIFA said a total of 1,774 shots were recorded during the group stage, averaging 24.6 attempts per match, with Belgium registering a tournament-high 73 shots. Of the 48 participating nations, 47 teams found the back of the net, with Panama the only side to finish the group stage without scoring. The tournament's all-time goal tally now stands at 2,935 goals. *—ANI*

Canada beats S Africa 1-0 in 1st WC knockout match

INGLEWOOD, 29 JUNE

Right after Canada finished its first knockout match victory in a World Cup, coach Jesse Marsch huddled his players on the grass of a stadium still in pandemonium and spoke from his heart — shouted, actually.

"You guys are Canadian heroes today!" Marsch declared. "Canadian heroes for the future children of this country who play this sport. The sport has a big future because of you guys. You should be so proud of who you are. You should be so proud of this game. You never lost belief. You went after it, point after point, moment after moment. You are Canadian heroes!"

Stephen Eustáquio's dramatic late goal had inspired Marsch to Ted Lasso levels of earnestness, and he didn't care who knew it.

Soccer has never been the main event on Canada's busy sports calendar, and Les Rouges are playing in only their third World Cup this summer. But Marsch realized this landmark 1-0 win over South Africa on Sunday is the type of achievement that can seize an entire nation's attention for a generation.

"We could have made life a little easier on ourselves if we would have made a play earlier when we had some big chances," Marsch said. "But obviously the timing of the goal means that the win is incredibly dramatic, and I think the effect that it will have in Canada, and the inspiring of people, will be immense."

After 90-plus minutes of frustration and failure to break down cagey South Africa at SoFi Stadium, Canada made history in an instant when Alistair Johnston's long pass into the box was cleared directly into the path of Eustáquio.

The midfielder who plays professionally at nearby Los Angeles FC coolly chested it down and blasted it off the bounce into the bottom corner of Ronwen Williams' net before sprinting away to celebrate with Canada's bench in the second minute of second-half stoppage time.

"We worked for it," Eustáquio said. "We have a special group. We feel like we are brothers. When we fight for each other, when we play for each other, special things like this can happen. I am over the moon, but at the same time I don't want to say that the job is finished."

Canada, which sits 30th in the most recent FIFA world rankings, advanced to face the Netherlands or Morocco in Houston on Saturday. *—PTI*

Eustáquio delivers late strike for Canada

The tension kept building between two teams making their first appearance in a World Cup knockout match. With no goals on the scoreboard, the minutes ticked down with extra time looming. Then Stephen Eustáquio scored in the second minute of second-half stoppage time, and Canada beat South Africa 1-0 on Sunday. "I shot with everything I had," Eustáquio said. The party was on, for red-clad fans in the stands at SoFi Stadium and at watch parties across Canada. "Overall, it's pretty much a perfect knockout performance," right back Alistair Johnston said. Hockey dominates Canada in the winter months. Now, summer belongs to the men's national soccer team. The country's previous best men's international result was winning CONCACAF Gold Cup championships in 1985 and 2000. The women's Olympic team won gold at the 2020 Tokyo Games. "For Canadian sports history, it's going to be a moment where you're going to kind of know where you were when that moment happened," he said. *—PTI*

South Korea's exit prompts criticism from President

SEOUL, 29 JUNE

South Korea left the World Cup in turmoil after the team's quick elimination from the group stage that drew heavy criticism from the country's president. Reports also said that coach Hong Myung-bo had quit after the elimination.

South Korea won its opening match against Czech Republic, then lost its next two Group A matches to South Africa and Mexico.

South Korea hoped it would qualify for the next round as one of the third-place teams to advance in this year's expanded tournament. That ended when Congo defeated Uzbekistan 3-1 on Saturday.

The quick exit for a team that expected to advance prompted harsh criticism from President Lee Jae Myung.

"As a former honorary professional football club chairman and, at heart, a member of the Red Devils, I feel not just surprise but deep bewilderment at this unexpected result," the president said in a lengthy statement critical of national team structure and oversight and coach Myung-bo's appointment in the first place.

"Once again, it has been proven that personnel decisions determine everything. If loyalty and factionalism are valued over competence and an incapable person is appointed as a leader, the outcome is as predictable as fire," the president said.

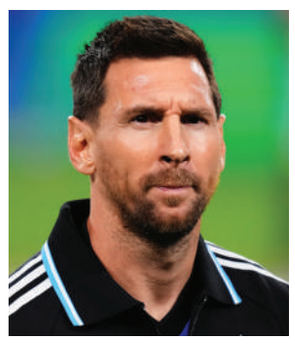
Hong, 57, was in his second stint with the national team. He was the coach at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil when South Korea also failed to advance past the group stage.

South Korea is a regular at the World Cup with 11 consecutive appearances, and was a semi-finalist when it was co-host of the tournament in 2002. President Myung called for the national Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism to review the national team its failures.

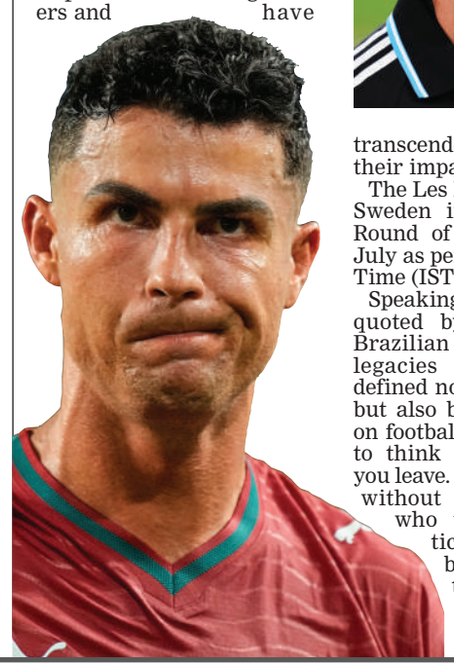
"I sincerely apologize to the public for the deep disappointment caused by this absurd situation. We will move swiftly to reform sports administration to ensure this does not happen again," Myung said. *—PTI*

RONALDO PRAISES MESSI, COMPARES MBAPPE TO HIS PRIME SELF

NEW JERSEY 29 JUNE



Brazilian football legend Ronaldo Nazario praised Argentina captain Lionel Messi and France forward and skipper Kylian Mbappe, saying both players deserve to be among the FIFA World Cup's all-time leading scorers and have transcended statistics with their impact on the game.



The Les Blues will take on Sweden in a high-voltage Round of 32 contest on 1 July as per Indian Standard Time (IST).

Speaking to L'Equipe, as quoted by Goal.com, the Brazilian legend said the legacies of players are defined not only by records but also by their influence on football. "You also have to think about the legacy you leave. But they are both, without a doubt, players who transcend statistics and deserve to be the competition's all-time top scorers," Ronaldo said.

The former footballer hailed Messi as one of the greatest footballers in history, highlighting the Argentine's continued influence on the pitch. "Messi is one of the greatest players in the history of football and he is still influential and decisive today," he added.

Ronaldo also reserved high praise for Mbappe, comparing the France captain's style of play to his own during his prime years. "As for Mbappe, his playing style reminds me of myself at my peak. He is one of the greatest players in football today and a natural heir to the legends of the game," Ronaldo said. *—ANI*

POST EARTHQUAKE

Neymar donates $2,50,000 to Venezuela

CARACAS, 29 JUNE

Brazilian football star Neymar has reportedly donated USD 250,000 to support emergency rescue and humanitarian relief efforts in Venezuela, according to Venezuelan news outlet El Sumario.com.

The report said the funds will be used to provide immediate assistance to people affected by the emergency, including the supply of food, drinking water, medical supplies and temporary shelters.

"My heart goes out to the people of Venezuela," Neymar said as quoted by El Sumario.com, while expressing his hope that this contribution would bring strength and relief to the affected families.

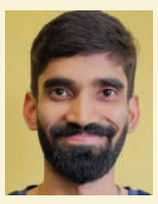
According to CNN, citing an update provided by Venezuela's National Assembly President Jorge Rodriguez, at least 1,430 people have died in the devastating twin earthquakes that hit the country on Wednesday. He added that 3,238 people have been injured, while 3,142 families have been displaced after losing their homes.

Rescue teams continue to search for survivors as the critical rescue window narrows, with operations being hindered by a shortage of heavy equipment and persistent aftershocks.

Since the twin earthquakes--measuring 7.2 and 7.5 in magnitude--struck Venezuela on Wednesday, the country has experienced multiple aftershocks and smaller tremors, complicating ongoing rescue and relief efforts. *—ANI*

Badminton: Srikanth ends runner-up at US Open

FULLERTON , 29 JUNE



Kidambi Srikanth ended his impressive run with a runner-up finish at the US Open Super 300 badminton tournament after going down fighting in three games to Chinese Taipei's Su Li-yang in the men's singles final here.

The 33-year-old Srikanth, a silver-medallist at the 2021 World Championships, recovered from the loss of the opening game to force a decider but couldn't match the pace and intensity of world No. 46 Su, who is nine years his junior.

Srikanth, who had claimed six Super Series titles between 2014 and 2017, eventually lost 15-21, 21-16, 9-21 in a physical battle that lasted just over an hour here on Sunday.

"I could have played a little better maybe in the opening set. Otherwise, I feel I've played okay. The second half of third set it was just hitting really well all of a sudden," said the man from Guntur after the match.

A Rio Olympics quarterfinalist, Srikanth also ended second at the Malaysia Masters Super 500 and Syed Modi International Super 300 last year.

"I just feel like whatever I've been doing is working. I just have to keep working hard. I feel like I'm there. It's just about being able to win those crucial points," added Srikanth, who had become the first Indian to secure four Super Series titles in a single calendar year in 2017. *—PTI*

Hockey Pro League: India beat England

LONDON, 29 JUNE

India beat England 3-2 in penalty shoot-out — *HOCKEY INDIA*

India avenged their defeat to England with a gritty 3-2 penalty shoot-out victory after a hard-fought goalless draw in the return leg of the Hockey Pro League here on Sunday.

Abhishek, Shilanand Lakra and Hardik Singh converted their attempts in the shoot-out as India secured the bonus point with a composed display under pressure.

England dominated the early exchanges and earned a penalty corner after Sam Ward was brought down by Yashdeep Singh. India goalkeeper Mohith Shashikumar produced a superb double save before denying Ward again and then Sanford to keep the hosts at bay.

India's best chance of the opening quarter fell to Abhishek, who threatened late in the period, but England enjoyed the better of the possession and attacking opportunities.

The hosts maintained the pressure in the second quarter and came close through Bandurak, while India responded with a Jarmanpreet Singh effort that was well saved by the England goalkeeper. Despite sustained English attacks, India's defence stood firm as the teams went into the break locked at 0-0.

India returned with greater attacking intent after half-time, launching several dangerous counterattacks. Hardik Singh created a fine opening for Mandeep Singh, but the England goalkeeper once again came to his side's rescue.

A key moment arrived late in the third quarter when England were awarded a penalty stroke after Yashdeep Singh was adjudged to have fouled Henry Croft. India immediately opted for a video referral, and replays showed a clean tackle, leading to the decision being overturned.

India then held their nerve in the shoot-out, with Abhishek, Shilanand Lakra and Hardik Singh finding the net to seal a 3-2 victory and earn the bonus point.

Defender Sanjay, who was named Player of the Match, marshalled a resolute defensive effort, while goalkeepers Mohith Shashikumar and Sanjay Karkera made decisive contributions to preserve the clean sheet.

The victory was India's final Hockey Pro League fixture before the FIH Hockey World Cup. *—PTI*

Serena Williams calls anti-doping system 'gruelling'

LONDON, 29 JUNE

Serena Williams took aim at tennis' anti-doping system ahead of her Wimbledon return, calling the system "unprofessional" and "unreasonable."

Williams, 44, was asked about her experiences with the rules. "It's gruelling. They changed the rules now. I didn't know some of the rules. So apparently if you miss a test outside of your window, it still counts as missed. I'm like, I guess I can't go pick up my kids," said the seven-time Wimbledon champion, a mother of two. "It's unprofessional. I hate it. I think it's necessary." Her first match at the grass-court Grand Slam since 2022 will take place on Tuesday when she faces Maya Joint in her comeback. *—PTI*